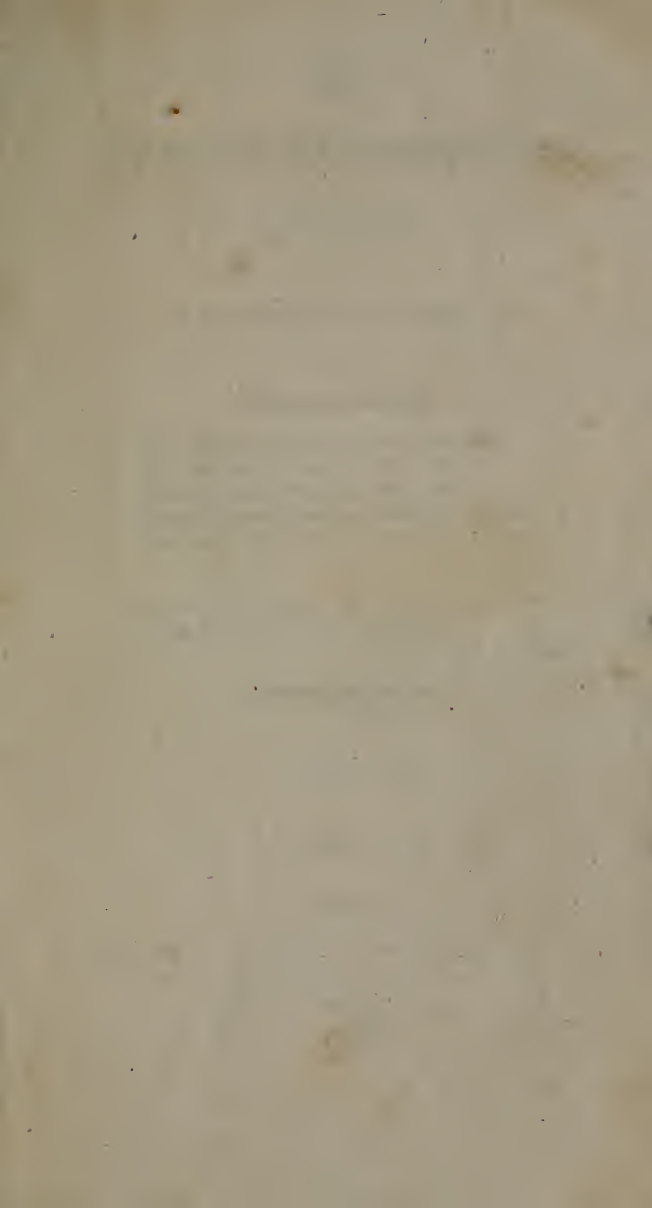






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THE
EVE OF SAN-PIETRO.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Ruin from man is most conceal'd when near,
And sends the dreadful tidings in the blow !
Is this the flight of fancy ? would it were !
Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings, but Himself,
That hideous sight—a NAKED HUMAN HEART !
YOUNG.

You've wrong'd me all, and on you all—but hold—
I form Revenge too mighty to be told !
OVID'S EPISTLES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES, STRAND;
BY I. GOLD, SHOE-LANE, FLEET-STREET.

1804.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

Printed by J. Sturges

at the Sign of the Sun in St. Dunstons Church

near the North Gate

1680

Price 1s. 6d.

Half bound in leather

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Printed by J. Sturges

at the Sign of the Sun in St. Dunstons Church

near the North Gate

1680

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THE

EVE OF SAN-PIETRO.

CHAP. I.

“ All places, that the eye of Heaven visits,
Are, to the wise man, ports and happy havens ;
Teach thy necessities to reason thus :
There is no virtue like necessity.”

SHAKESPEARE.

FROM a quiet slumber of three hours, Viola was awakened by the burning rays of the sun darting full upon her face. She arose from her couch, refreshed both in body and mind, and most anxious for the arrival of the Marchese, that she might get over, as soon as possible, the dreaded meeting

with her lover, and know at once the extent of her expectations on his father. That she should be under the necessity of looking forward to these expectations, certainly mortified and wounded her ; for she had a lofty spirit, and one that could ill brook dependance on a being she neither loved nor esteemed ; yet she felt also, that there was more true elevation of sentiment, in submitting to our necessities with forbearance and resignation, than by making useless opposition to inevitable evils ; since she had now lost all that could make her present situation desirable, surely it was no longer to be regretted ; and though she could not exist to those fond and relative connexions which render life a blessing, she must live to the discharge of such duties as would make it supportable : “ and,” she exclaimed, while
her

her whole face beamed with animation, " I shall at least find happiness in the certainty that Albenza enjoys it ! for though from pole to pole divided, this anxious heart, true as the needle to its centre, will ever vibrate to each beat of his ! blown on each gale, that gives me life and motion, shall I inhale his pleasures and his pains, share in his sorrows, suffer in his griefs ; and the last sigh that wafts my careworn soul back to the only Father it ever knew, shall be to beg a blessing on Albenza ! Ah !" she added, with a sigh that expressed rather the settled gloom of despair, than the serenity of resigned dejection, " I will learn to think that the sun shines out of Terra di Lavora, to banish remembrance, to forget that ever I loved, that ever I was cherished !" Involuntarily, as if the idea had presented them for the

last time, she gazed over the plains, the fields, the woods, once consecrated to delight, as valued friends, from whom she was about to separate eternally ; yet not long was this sad solace permitted ; for her humid eyes, as if in pity to her heart, obscured the view, and again were turned inward to herself. A knocking at her chamber-door now caused her to start from her seat, and give entrance to Laurentine, who, surprised at not seeing her as usual in the saloon, at the breakfast hour, had come to offer her refreshment ; for this kind motive Viola thanked her, but she soon perceived her visit had more than one intention, for she cautiously closed the door, and only seemed to wait a slight interrogation, to unburthen herself of a weight of intelligence. Viola, who guessed her meaning by her looks, soon gave her an opportunity, by an inquiry,

inquiry,

inquiry, "if any farther news had arrived of the Marchese?"

"OH, Signiora! here's a sad piece of work brewing up I'm afraid!" exclaimed the waiting maid; "Marco arrived by seven o'clock this morning, with orders to prepare every thing for the reception of the Signior his master, who is to be here to-day: to be sure, misfortunes never come single."

"GRACIOUS Heaven! Laurentine, what mean you? what misfortunes can have befallen Albenza, cried Viola," turning paler than her own garment.

"OH no, Signiora," answered Laurentine, "it is not to be yet; it would not be decent, you know, so soon after my poor dear Lady's death; though Marco tells me she is to be thrust into

the earth almost before she's cold ; for he has brought a letter for the Father Zanotti, from my Lord the Marchese, which, he says, desires that my Lady may be buried on the night after to-morrow, which is only three days after her death."

" Good Providence !" said Viola, raising her meek eyes to Heaven, " are the persecutions of this, the best of thy creatures, to extend even to the grave ? Oh, I had better speed me from this mansion ! misery—misery—I feel await me in my stay ! I will write to the Abbess of the Santa Ursulina ! I will away before the arrival of this unfeeling man—before the malice he bore to her, be extended to the wretched object of her protection ! Alas ! Albenza, how must thy heart bleed at the indignities offered to the sacred remains

remains of one whom so much you honoured and revered !”

“ I WARRANT it does, Signiora, for that matter ; it is a noble one, I am sure, and a pity it is that it should ever meet a cross or disappointment.”

“ TRUE, my good girl ; and it is a sad one, to return in the hope of being pressed to the tender breast of a parent, and then find that breast chill and senseless.”

“ AYE ; I remember I thought so, Signiora,” replied Laurentine, “ when my Lady gave me leave to go to Naples to see mine : when I got to the door, my poor mother was a corpse : yet I did not mean that kind of disappointment either, Signiora ; I meant love ;

'tis the hardest thing of all to be cross that way."

" LOVE!" said Viola, blushing; " love! is the Signior in love, Laurentine?"

" So Marco tells me, Signiora," answered the girl; " indeed its only what I used to think myself; and if I thought you would not be angry, I'd tell you all about it."

" OH no," said Viola, who determined to feel callous to every thing she heard, " I cannot now be hurt at any thing."

" WHY then, Signiora," said Laurentine, who now thinking herself a person of importance, took her seat
near

near the table, I'll tell you all; but, Santa Marie! I forgot you've had no breakfast."

"NOR do I want any," replied Viola, in a broken voice; "*I* must learn to feed on sorrow."

"DON'T say so, Signiora," answered her companion, half sobbing; "I am sure my poor Lady would walk the castle if she thought so, though I am not such a believer in spirits as some folks." She now proceeded to inform her she had heard from Marco (who was her lover,) that the Marchese was very anxious his son should espouse a Lady at Naples, of whose father *he* had borrowed large sums of money; but that the Signior had declared openly his attachment to Viola, and refused to listen to the proposition. To de-

scribe what passed in the mind of Viola at this moment would be impossible ; so strong was the fluctuation between despair and that pleasure which, spite of her reason and prudence, she could not resist, that she feared, even by demanding an explanation, to hazard betraying her feelings : with her looks bent on Laurentine, she seemed endeavouring to catch with her eyes, that which she thought her ear was tardy in obtaining : “ Good God ! ” she at length exclaimed, “ what will become of me ? ”

“ AYE, indeed I don’t know,” replied Laurentine, in a sorrowful tone ; “ the Marchese is like a hunted tyger, when he’s put up, that’s a sure thing.”

VIOLA now demanded by what means Marco had obtained his information ?

mation? and whether she was assured of its veracity?

“ I CANNOT doubt what Marco tells me, Signiora,” returned Laurentine; “ and you must know, that Marco has often heard the Signior talk of you to himself, and call upon your name so pitifully, that he declares it used to melt his heart to hear him; and so Marco, who adores his master, and between you and I, Signiora, hates the Marchese, went with the carriage to fetch them from the Conte’s; and when they returned, after the assembly, my Lord and the Signior had high words; and the door standing open, and Marco waiting in the hall for orders, could not help going a little nearer, and there he heard the Signior di Albenza declare, that he never would have any other woman but you, Sig-

niora ; and I cannot but applaud his spirit ; for, after all, what is love, if it is not true and constant ?”

DURING this recital, Viola rose from her seat, sat down again, then prest the hand of the wondering Laurentine, and traversed the apartment in such disorder and agitation, that the domestic began to fear she had disturbed the senses of her auditor : “ Generous, noble Albenza !” exclaimed Viola, “ pride and pleasure of my soul ! what hast thou not done ? He is unhappy !” she cried, tears streaming down her cheeks, “ and I, unfortunate as I am, am the cause !”

“ DON’T take on so, sweet Signiora Viola,” replied Laurentine ; and when I’ve finished all the bad news, you shall then have the good : the Marchese
is

is certainly determined on this marriage in his own mind ; for in three weeks the Conte and his daughter are to come here on a visit, and she's as proud as Lucifer, and, if report speaks truth, not over particular in her behaviour ; to be sure, however, as I said before, this wedding cannot take place directly, for decency's sake, and many things may still happen between 'the cup and the lip ;' and here, Signiora," taking a letter from her pocket, "here's what will give you comfort in the mean time."

VIOLA hastily caught the well-known characters, nothing could ever obliterate from her memory ; and if it be possible that an emanation of exquisite rapture can for an instant supersede the keenest sensations of anguish, it was that Viola felt, when she prest, for the first time

in her life, a letter of Albenza's to her bosom : hastily she broke the seal, and read these words :—

“ I HAVE for two long years avoided you : forgive me, if I say, that I even resolved to sacrifice my feelings, to the prejudices of my situation, and to the duties I owe my family, by endeavouring to conquer a passion I find can only terminate with my life. Dearest Viola, if you have ceased to love me, (for I will still think I once held a place in your affections,) pity me, and do not drive me to despair : I am convinced my mother would have sanctioned our union ; fly with me, then, from a world we both despise, and from a spot which now teems with danger for you. Ah ! can you refuse to join your fate to his, who would give up his existence, to purchase your welfare ?”

SHE

SHE read the letter over three times, again opened it, and again perused what seemed to have raised her, from the lowest abyss of misery, to the very pinnacle of her wishes.

“I AM still dear to him!” she cried, clasping her hands in ecstasy, “and I ask no more! Oh! I am rich, beyond all earthly wealth, and blest above all women!” Ye sweet, yet transient sensations, wherefore are ye bestowed, unless to last for ever? Ye fine spun fibres of sensibility, that twine your ligaments about the heart, and build a nest of rapture and of hope, a very touch doth crush, a breath dissolves ye! like to a summer’s cloud, ye melt away, and leave the breast exposed, to doubly suffer, because once doubly blest! These were the sentiments Viola experienced, when she put the

packet of Albenza in her bosom ! A moment's reflection had, alas ! convinced her, that she ought rather to lament, than rejoice at a circumstance, which in the first natural impulse had had given her so much delight ; for stern integrity, rigid propriety, and cold, callous prudence, at once overwhelmed her with the mournful truth ; that it was just she should be wretched ; that it was her duty to resist the offers of the man she loved ; and that in the harsh opinion of the world, she would be branded with the hideous character of ingratitude, for consenting to make him happy ! The world !—and was a being so superior as Viola di Benincasor, to act against her judgment, and her own just conceptions of what was right, because slander might taint her fame, or calumny her conduct ? Yes, that vigour of mind, that activity

activity of thought, which had taught her, inwardly to prefer the dignity of truth to the despotic force of general and received opinions ; that strength of reasoning, which had led her to condemn the oppressions of prejudice, and the tyranny of custom, had taught her also, that as a woman, she should submit to them ; nay, that the very man, whose delusive arguments had led her to deviate from their laws, might, when the meridian of passion was in its wane, reproach her for having done so. It had been the care of her lost benefactress, to impress this lesson on her mind, “ that in the hey-dey of youth, and in the season of love and pleasure, the heart contracts itself into one narrow boundary, beyond which it fondly imagines it shall never be obliged to roam ; but too soon is it driven from its self-created paradise,
deserted ;

deserted; sad thought! perhaps despised by the beloved object who had spread the fascination! Whither then can it seek a refuge? where hope for an asylum? Friendship has shut its door, benevolence is closed by suspicion, and chilled by the fear of censure: lost, abandoned, and contemned, the wretched sufferer lays her down, and dies; victim of that opinion she once thought to have braved with impunity." Viola shuddered, as this well-remembered admonition came o'er her mind. "Fly with you!" she exclaimed; "oh! never—we may both be miserable, but we never can be united!" She sat down by the table, drew the letter again from her bosom, and deluged it with tears; while poor Laurentine, who possessed an overflowing share 'of the milk of human kindness,' crept close to her chair, and wept beside her.

“WELL,

“ WELL, Signiora !” she at last cried, “ every thing may turn out for the best, after all ; for my own part, I don’t care how soon I leave the castle, now my dear Lady is gone ; for I declare it always throws me into a panick every time I see Father Zanotti stalking through the rooms, just like a great black giant, as he is ; and then Bernardo, who looks for all the world like a murderer !”——Viola started ! the recollection of the conversation she had heard the preceding night, darted to her thoughts, and produced so strange a concatenation, that she could scarcely support it. Laurentine, who had, however, a confirmed aversion to both Zanotti and Bernardo, had now started her favourite topic, and it would have been no easy matter to make her relinquish it ; she enumerated and exaggerated, with the greatest volubility,

their

their faults and imperfections, and concluded by asking Viola, "if she had never observed, that the Monk scarcely ever drew the cowl from his face, particularly when in company?"

VIOLA, who had not remarked this circumstance at the time, now replied, "that since she was reminded of it, she remembered it was a constant habit of his to do so."

"AYE, Signiora, I don't know much of these matters," answered the servant, "but strange reports go about the castle: some say he is only a bad spirit, in the form of a priest; for Pedro, one of the lay-brothers, declares, that he never eats, drinks, or sleeps; but there he is, all night, walking up and down the cell: for my part, I don't believe in ghosts, but I think
he

he has a troubled conscience, by the very look of him."

VIOLA, to whom this mention had conjured up images of death and horror, now demanded of her companion, "if it would be possible for her to obtain one last look of the Marchesa, before she was buried?"

LAURENTINE shook her head, saying she feared it could not be, as the Abbate always came, as soon as Father Jerome had left the room, to lock the door; and that she and Bianca were not to sit up with the body any longer. She now proceeded to say, that if she could but get an interview with Father Jerome, he would tell her a great deal relative to Zanotti, for that *he* was at the convent when he was first admitted one of its order. She was now called,
but

but returned, to intreat Viola would allow her to bring Jerome in the evening to her apartment ; to this she at last consented, for her curiosity increased every day respecting Zanotti ; and every thing she heard, tended to strengthen the conviction, that there was some lurking history attached to him. He had now been twenty years in the convent, but friends, family, or connexions, no one had ever heard him mention ; nor had he either (excepting to the castle), strayed beyond its walls ; nor, but in the duties of his function, did he ever enter into conversation with a human being ; and, in short, appeared to have a mind so blunted and chilled, either by the crimes or calamities of his early career, that it resembled a hard and rugged rock, inaccessible to mankind ; dark and dreary to himself. From these reflections she

again

again returned to her own situation : misfortunes make us selfish, and it is the poor privilege of sorrow, to delight in brooding over them : she besought Heaven, who had given her strength to look forward to want and privation with calmness and fortitude, to grant her firmness to bear up against temptation and her own inclinations ; and she resolved, as her mind gained power to argue with itself, to write immediately to the Abbess of the Santa Ursulina, informing her of her distress, and requesting her protection : this she instantly did ; she knew it was a proper measure, and she determined to fulfil it ; she sealed her letter, rang for a servant, and sent it to the post-house ; but a torrent of tears succeeded to this effort of heroism, and the idea of Albenza unhappy, nearly put to flight every acquired principle of fortitude :

more

more than ever too, was she terrified at the thought of encountering the Marchese, to whose natural dislike would be added his viewing her in the light of a designing girl, who had destroyed the hopes of his family, by interesting its only son in her favour. Olivia, for there indeed was she most vulnerable; could she bear her scorn, her hatred, and malice? Ah no!—this was too much, and she rejoiced that her letter to the Abbess might cause her departure in a few days. It was now with many pangs, that her mind recurred to what might have been the destiny of her parents; her own mysterious and apparently disastrous origin: and she turned cold, as she remembered the task yet to be performed, in destroying the records of their fate. The extraordinary disappearance of her papers, Gradisca, the interesting Lorenzo, and
above

above all, Zanotti, with the late midnight conference, in which he had borne so guilty a part, all rushed upon her recollection, and overwhelmed her with perplexity and dismay. Wearied with thought, she now left her apartment, to try the effect of change of scene on her harassed spirits, determining, however, the instant she heard of Albenza's arrival, to return to the confinement of her own room, and at any rate avoid a meeting with him that day. As she passed the chamber of the Marchesa, she faltered; day-light had dissipated those awful sensations, which ever attend a view of mortality in the gloom of night, and she clung round the door, as if by enclosing, it had acquired the spirit of her she deplored; she tried the lock, it was fast as the servant had told her, and the key gone; sorrowfully, therefore, she

descended to the saloon, and was approaching the viranda, when a book, open on the table, caught her attention ; the author's name was not prefixed, but it treated learnedly, though erroneously, of the passions ; and where that of revenge was analysed, various manuscript notes were written with a pencil on the margin ; these she read with admiration, for they were so forcibly, so clearly expressed, that the commentator seemed to have said more in ten lines, than the writer in a whole volume.

“WHOEVER has exemplified these opinions,” thought Viola, “ must have felt them ; pity it is, that one so ardent should be so mistaken.”——As she moved from the table, a slight rustling behind, caused her to look round, and Zanotti stood before her ;

but not as generally she used to catch a glimpse of that fear-inspiring countenance, half shaded and obscured by the sable cowl ; it was now thrown back, his eyes flashed fire, and his whole frame seemed more than human.

“ CLOSE that book !” he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, “ it is mine !—— and it were better, daughter, till the coming of the Marchese fixes your future destiny, that you remained within the apartments allotted to your use ; quietness of deportment, and a submissive, yielding conduct, are characteristics by which a woman should be distinguished. Hah !” he continued, looking sternly in her face, “ what then does she deserve, whose rapacious curiosity prys into concealments not meet for her to know, and who artfully employs her sex’s blandish-

c 2

ments,

ments, to set a son in opposition to a father's wishes?"

VIOLA sunk on her knees before him; "I am innocent of ever trying to seduce the affections of the Signior di Albenza; and I knew not, holy Father, that you had retired hither for study, or not for worlds would I have broken in upon your meditations; indeed I am oppressed by grief;—an unhappy orphan; and my cares have so deranged me, that I could not rest, and came here, merely in my way to the garden, for the sake of air." She fixed her eyes upon him, for at that moment she remembered who had contributed to break that rest; and the pride of conscious virtue enabled her to regard him without a fear.

"THEN there is a secret," retorted
the

the Friar ; “ a hidden secret that must cause this violent depression you complain of ; the loss of a female friend, young woman, is not wont in general to affect so deeply.”

VIOLA trembled ; he seemed to read her very soul, and the idea of the mysterious packet she had been enjoined to destroy, left her pale and conscious-struck before him.

“ WHAT secret, Holy Father,” she at length said, “ do you mean ? if you suppose me clandestinely encouraging the addresses of the Signior, you are grossly deceived ; I acknowledge that the love I bear him flows here in streams so constant, and so pure, that death alone can check their current ; but I shall leave him !” she cried, her voice faltering with emotion ; “ in a

few days I shall be far removed from witnessing his misery, or being the victim of unjust suspicion."

"OH, holy Father!" she continued, tremulously catching hold of his garment, "let me not lose this occasion of endeavouring to interest you in my favour; I cannot but be conscious, that I am an object of disgust to the Marchese; Heaven knows for what! but I shudder to what evils it may reduce me; do you then, holy Father, whose commission it is, under God, to be a father to the fatherless, pity me. Oh! if by some kind sympathetic chance, you have ever known what it is to be deserted, despised, to be the child of obscurity, of disgrace, abandoned, without a home, without money, without friends"——

"AWAY!"

“AWAY!”——cried the Monk, tearing himself forcibly from her grasp, and drawing the cowl over his face, “I have no heart for you to twine about;—Father! there’s mockery in the name!—abandoned—why, ’tis well!—that is but saying thou art not surrounded by crouds of fawning sycophants!”——He paused, paced the room with the utmost velocity, then stopped and regarded her. “Poor insect!” he exclaimed, and the drops of cold perspiration chased down his wrinkled forehead; “poor insect! whose ignorance would buz round the flame that scorches thee! but that I chase the dastard from my bosom, I could feel pity for thine abject state!—pity, did I say? thou, woman’s virtue, never shalt thou enter there. No;—within this rocky tenement, there’s not a passion but of which I’m ruler, save one, *that*

ruleth over *me* ; it is the leviathan of my soul, and swallows up each tributary sentiment."

VIOLET was terrified ; his words, though nearly unintelligible, too plainly evinced she had no protection to hope for from him ; her conjectures relative to the midnight meeting, were confirmed ; and she only wondered she had ever imagined that one particle of tenderness or humanity could inhabit the dark breast of an assassin. Alarmed almost to sinking, at the gloomy frenzy of his manner, she thought only of effecting her escape, when Zanotti caught her arm, exclaiming in a voice so hollow, that it sounded as one from the grave,—

" I HAVE 'no commiseration for common miseries ; but yet that look
of

yours tells me I will not seek *your* death, or *your* destruction!"

"DEATH!—destruction!" shrieked the affrighted Viola; "Oh God! oh Father! your words are dark, are horrible! on my knees let me intreat, if you know aught of my fate, that you will explain"——

"BEWARE," interrupted Zanotti, "how you tempt the dangers you may avert; the path thou hast to tread is so perilous, that one rash step may dash thee down the precipice to atoms; beware how you repeat the words that have escaped me, and remember," darting his keen eye into hers, "that the impulse of a moment often crushes the plan of years, and be thankful," and she thought once his voice weakened, "that thou art free from the contagion of vice

and depravity, though misfortunes pursue thee through the world."——He stopped, a groan burst from his bosom ! his hand pressed his forehead, but soon, as if recollecting himself, he commanded her instantly to leave him. Gladly did Viola obey his order, but so overcome with awe, grief, and terror, that she could scarcely reach her own dressing room ; here she revolved over the past, and now doubly anxious to learn some further account of this Zannotti, whose history she almost fancied bore some dark and wonderful reference to the concealed one that enveloped herself ; her blood ran cold at the suggestion ; the emotion, the words of the Monk, sunk deep into her soul ; and her apprehensions so rapidly increased of the Marchese, that in order to avoid the necessity of an immediate interview, she enclosed the Marchesa's

chesa's two letters, and directing them to the Signior, had them conveyed into his library. She now remembered the good Father Jerome, whom Laurentine had promised to bring to her apartment in the evening : never before had she fancied the day so long ; and unable to engage in any occupation, she sat before the open lattice, indulging ' meditation even to madness.' From this she was however soon aroused, by a noise and bustle through the castle ; and as she unclosed her door, to learn the cause, the voice of Albenza, that voice so well beloved, was soon recognised ; in an instant she retreated, for to meet him, thus unprepared as she was, was impossible ; and with the most eager anxiety did she await the entrance of Laurentine ; for to hear tidings of him her rectitude forbade her to see, was a consolation, and one that brought

no self-reproach to damp its melancholy pleasure. In less than an hour, the important waiting-maid made her appearance, and to Viola's numberless enquiries she replied, that the Signior was so altered, no one who had seen him two years back, would know him now ; that he was pale, thin, and dejected, though handsome as ever, and that his first question had been relative to herself ; that he had then entered into a cold and brief conference with the Abbate, and having demanded of him the key of his mother's chamber, had retired thither to indulge his grief in privacy, and she believed was now shut up with the body ; soon after, Zanotti went home to his convent, and Father Jerome would be at the castle by nine o'clock, and be punctual to Viola's appointment. She concluded this, by telling her, the Signior was much

hurt and enraged at the idea of his mother's premature interment, and that he had spoken with Zanotti on the subject, but that the latter replied, it was the will of the Marchese, and as such, his duty to perform it strictly.

VIOLETTA asked, whether Albenza had mentioned the letter he sent her in the morning?

“No, Signiora,” said Laurentine, “he seemed scarcely able to speak; I declare I never saw a Signior look so sad and woe-begone in my whole life before.”

VIOLETTA now desired her to tell him, that she was at present inadequate to the task of writing; that she was also unable to see him, but would send an answer to his letter in a day or two: this done, she informed Laurentine,

it was her wish to visit the cottage of Gradisca, provided she could do so without interruption.

LAURENTINE replied, “ she could not tell ; but that Bernardo had been great part of the morning with the poor woman, to urge her once more to consent to her nephew’s being removed ; that she still persisted in declaring, they would starve together, sooner than he should leave her ; and with that, Bernardo, who has had a promise of the ground for himself, Signiora, from the Marchese, was in a violent passion, and threatened to turn them out immediately. This I was told by one of the neighbours ; certain it is, Bernardo returned home more surly than usual.”

“ SURELY,” said Viola, “ the Marchese

chese never can tolerate such unjust proceedings."

"I DON'T know how it is, Signiora," answered the servant, "but my Lord always seemed toowe a grudge to Gradisca. Lorenzo they say is getting much better in his head than he used to be, but I think the Marchese has treated them worse since that has been the case; to be sure it seems a hard thing to shut the poor young man up, just when there seems a chance of his recovery." Viola sunk into a fit of musing; she had conceived a strong aversion to Bernardo, who had lived for some years in the service of the Marchese at Naples, but had only been retained this last year as steward of the castle. He had a countenance, where cunning and ferocity were personified; his figure gaunt, aukward,
and

and muscular, inspired every beholder with fear and detestation; and his hard, unfeeling treatment of those poor inoffensive beings, sufficiently proved that his face was the true index of his nature; far from being intimidated in her zeal, by the tyranny which oppressed them, she felt more anxious than ever, to administer such little comforts and kindnesses as lay within her power: during the life of her benefactress, the persecutions of the steward had been confined within bounds, and because it had now burst forth with increased inhumanity, was it to deter *her* from endeavouring to assist them? ah! no,—Viola was no coward in a good cause. She requested Laurentine therefore would look out, and see if all was quiet, and then determined to set forth directly. She reached the saloon without meeting a
single

single person, and was congratulating herself on the success of her enterprise, when the abrupt entrance of Bernardo caused her suddenly to stop. Without speaking, he seemed to busy himself in making trivial arrangements in the furniture of the apartment, every now and then casting his eye askance at Viola, as if to observe her motions. Piqued at an intrusion which she could not but interpret as designed and impertinent, she mildly requested, he would defer his employment till she had left the room. To this he answered, that till the arrival of the Marchese, the castle was in his charge, and therefore he had a right to inhabit whatever room he chose; “moreover, Signiora,” he added in a voice at once surly and contemptuous, “as such it is my business to acquaint you, it is the will and pleasure of my Lord, the Marchese,

chese, that no one goes to interfere with his wishes relative to Gradisca, the old woman who lives with her mad nephew in the valley.

“ It is unnecessary you should particularize the unfortunate person you mean, Bernardo,” said Viola, calmly turning from the viranda, and seating herself on a sofa; “ I cannot look at *you*, without remembering the wretched situation to which she is reduced; while I am necessitated to remain under the roof of your Lord, I shall submit to his commands, however rigorously they may be enforced; I only regret, that while the Marchese has a son so worthy to fill his place, he should depute power to one so unqualified to exercise it as you are.”

“ To be sure,” answered the man
with

with an ironical grin, "he would give him the exercise of power over *you* : yes, yes," he added, looking in her face, and significantly nodding his head, "the Signior would like nothing better, I dare say : I rather think I know my Lord a little better than you do ; and if you wish to keep him your friend, don't try to peep and pry into all his private concerns : he's not over fond of you, at any rate ; and by the mass ! if he finds you up to him in that quarter, I would not stand in your shoes for all the wealth of our Lady !"

THE pang of lacerated feeling kept Viola silent ; till this hour, she had never discovered, that with our worldly consequence and prosperity, expires all respect from those low mercenary wretches, who fatten on our fortunes, only to triumph in the debasement they have

have assisted to bring on ; the scalding tear started to her eye, the glow of indignation mantled her cheek, as rising from her seat she commanded him to leave her : at this moment, and as Bernardo was preparing another humiliating insinuation, Albenza entered the room ; and Viola, who had hitherto submitted to her fate with fortitude and resignation, mortified by insult, and wounded by contempt, clung to the arms opened to receive her, speechless and agitated, while Bernardo, as the subtle enemy of our first parents, viewed them with a leer of malignity, and muttering something to himself, left the room. Recovered by his departure to a sense of her situation, and lost for an instant to every consideration but the delight of again beholding her lover, Viola bathed his hand with her tears, gazed earnestly on his pallid coun-

coun-

countenance ; and forgetful of the task she had imposed on herself, besought him to tell her “ if he was ill, if he was unhappy.”

“ TILL you assure me that you regard me with affection and compassion, I must ever be both,” replied Albenza ; “ it is in your power to recompence me for the loss of my mother ; it is in your power to make me the happiest as well as the most miserable of men : Viola, I have tried pleasure, solitude ; read, reflected ; entered into dissipation, to endeavour to forget you ; it was impossible ; your idea has become so connected with my very existence, that live without you I cannot ; you know the candour of my disposition ; *yours* has endeared you to me ; I have a thousand faults ; do you correct, model me ; make me like yourself ; be
my

my wife, my directress, my blessing; and, wealth and titles, what could ye afford me !”

“ My Lord,” said Viola, overcome by the impetuosity of his manner, “ if by acknowledging my regard I could soften the pang of separation, how gladly would I do it ! Albenza, I would appeal to your understanding : Alas ! situated as we are now, it is the only sentiment I dare appeal to—did I ever act towards you with duplicity ? Why then should you wound me, by suspecting that a conduct, which is the result of hardly enforced duty, arises from inconstancy or indifference ? Two years ago, and before I was as humble as now I am, I assured you, so much I valued your affection, that I never would prove unworthy of it ; believe me, I am incapable of trifling with the feelings

feelings of any one, still less with those of yours ; from your excellent mother I early learnt not to put too much confidence in my own strength ; I now beseech her son, to spare me a conflict, which, by depriving me of my own opinion, robs me of my only comfort : Albenza, I do not hesitate to say, that had Providence placed me in an equal lot, your love would have been the proudest boast of my heart, and that wherever my hapless destiny may lead me, your remembrance will be the dearest of my possessions ; but my affections must not conquer my principles ; I love your welfare, your honour, your respectability in the world ; and shall I be the means of depriving you of them ? No—I know the claims upon your rank, your character, and situation ; shall I assist in trampling upon them ? Never !”

“ MATCH-

“ MATCHLESS woman !” exclaimed Albenza, clasping his hands in energy, “ why are you thus perfect—why do you tempt me with a shew of wealth, only to prove how very poor I am? But do you think I will ever be the husband of Olivia?—do you think that I can live to see you wedded to another? Answer me!” he cried impatiently—“ You reject me, then ! without remorse, you doom me to misery and wretchedness !”

“ I ENTREAT you,” replied Viola, “ to be more composed, otherwise you will oblige me to go, and I wished to have reasoned”——

“ REASON !” interrupted Albenza, “ I will not listen to reason ! can it restore my beloved and sainted mother?—can it restore that Viola who has forsaken
saken

saken me?—Do not, in this crisis, depart from your native ingenuousness! suspense is torture! say at once that you will not be my wife—say it quickly!” he continued, in a wild and disordered manner, “that I may avoid all meetings with my father, and quit the castle before he arrives.”

VIOLETTA wept, alarmed at the paleness of his looks, and the violence of his conduct; she covered her face with her handkerchief, and wept bitterly. ALBENZA was softened; he knelt beside her, he pressed her hands to his heart, and besought her forgiveness: “Tell me,” he cried, “that I may yet hope; think of your own situation, reflect on mine, of the hazards you are exposed to, of the dangers which surround you; let me receive from your bounty the only relick of my departed parent, and

oh, Viola ! I will be every thing you wish me."

VIOLA, harassed and confused, now thought it better to appear passive, than by any farther opposition to irritate and offend him ; she besought him, therefore, to leave her, promising she would consider what he had said, and concluded by requesting him to take that rest and refreshment of which he evidently stood much in need ; this he consented to, on condition she would see him, whenever he solicited her to do so, and concluding with assuring her he would act with circumspection towards his father and Zannotti. The voice of a servant in the hall, here interrupted a conversation, which was again becoming too interesting ; and Albenza, at the repeated supplications of Viola, left the saloon.

When

When he reached the library, the first object that struck him, was the packet sent by Viola; for a moment he imagined that it might come from herself; and not without some trepidation broke the seal; he soon, however, recognised the hand-writing of his mother, and if his feelings on the occasion were less vivid, they were certainly not less painful. Her letter was such an one as it might be expected she would write in her last moments, to her only and beloved child. After the most tender exhortations, and affectionate advice, she admonished him never to forget the duty he owed the Marchese; for that whatever his failings might be, to remember still he was his father, and consequently entitled to his respect and obedience: she then, in the most earnest manner, recommended the orphan Viola to his attention and bounty,

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requesting, that if (as she wished him to do,) he soon became united to an amiable woman, he would then engage her protection for her deserted Protegée. It may be readily concluded the last words of the Marchesa had more than their due weight on the mind of her son : in obtaining this letter, he felt he had almost gained her sanction to their union ; for with that facility, with which youth ever finds a justification for its conduct, he quickly inferred, that when his mother solicited his care for Viola, and at the same time had expressed a wish for him to marry, that the same idea had given rise to her sentiments, as now breathed hope and promise to his heart.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

“Thrice the winds of night waved round ;
 The winds came down on the woods ;
 The torrents rush down on the rocks.”

OSSIAN.

IN the evening, Laurentine, true to her appointment, entered the dressing-room of Viola, accompanied by the Monk Jerome : “ I think, Signiora, I had better not fetch a light,” said the waiting-maid, respectfully placing a chair for the good priest ; “ Father Jerome says, that he does not wish to be seen, for fear of creating any suspicion ; and he thinks also, Signiora, that I had better remain here, for in case any one comes, you would not know so

well where to conceal him ; but to be sure, that's as you please." Viola smiled, and blushed ; she smiled at Laurentine's effort to qualify her own curiosity, and she blushed at the thought of appearing to act with secrecy in an affair where it scarcely seemed requisite. Jerome observed her confusion, and said, in accents where humility and benevolence were blended, and mildly placing his aged hand on her shoulder, " I regret, my child, that in a case where the motives are of the purest and most innocent nature, we should oftentimes be obliged to assume an appearance of duplicity, a vice always repugnant to good minds, and one we ought to tremble at the very semblance of."

" HOLY Father," said Viola, whose heart dilated as she caught the sounds
of

of peace and benignity, “but that I think my curiosity is in a degree justifiable, believe me I would not have subjected either of us to so unpleasant a task.”

DURING the life of the Marchesa, this worthy man had occasionally officiated as her confessor, as from her dislike to Zanotti, she had never permitted him the exercise of his function in regard to herself; the visits of Jerome, however, had been but seldom; for the tyranny of the Marchese had long debarred his wife from the society of those she preferred; and the vigilant jealousy of Zanotti had kept a strict watch over the good priest, and prevented his gaining frequent access to the Marchesa; he thought she possessed a secret; that secret he had long sought to develope, and become master

of; and for this purpose, he had recourse to all the denunciations of religion, and all the superstitions of the Catholic faith; but in vain:—the Marchesa suspected too much to trust him. It is more than probable, had Jerome been permitted to attend her in her last moments, she would have made a full and free confession, and acknowledged the secret of Viola's birth; that, however, as is already known, was not allowed, as the Marchese, who wished to prevent any communications reaching his son, had strictly enjoined Zanotti to prevent it.

“ALAS!” continued Viola, “since last we met, Father, what a loss have we all sustained! You, who knew the virtues of the saint I deplore, alone can feel how much I ought to lament her loss; would to God you had been permitted

permitted to attend her in her dying moments !”

THE Friar shook his head. “ Good Father,” said Viola, “ strong and weighty reasons conspire to interest me deeply in the history of your present Abbate : from Laurentine I understand that his mysterious life has caused no less wonder in your Convent than it does with us ; I would fain request you to relate to me such particulars as you are informed of ; I find *you* were of the fraternity when first *he* became one ; do you remember about what period that was ?”

“ I THINK I do, daughter,” answered the Father ; “ it is now near twenty years ago ; and it was on the Eve of San Pietro !” Viola looked at him ; the Eve of San Pietro was that which

seemed to disturb the imagination of the dying Marchesa. The only light that now rendered them visible to each other, was the faint refulgence of the moon, which, reflecting on the aged countenance of the Monk, gave additional serenity to the placid solemnity of an aspect, where religious resignation had mellowed the lines traced by the pencil of misfortune.

“ HOLY San Marco !” said Laurentine, whose natural hardihood was somewhat vanquished by the impressiveness of the scene ; “ Holy San Marco ! I recollect my Lady used always to be particularly sad and thoughtful on that day.”

“ AH !” said Father Jerome, “ the night that I allude to can never be forgotten : my child,” he continued,
in

in a voice that seemed to falter under awakened retrospections, “sorrow drove me to the convent I now inhabit many years ago; and I little thought, when I used with my companions to partake of the innocent festivities given by the amiable Bertoldo, (late Lord of the domain,) that either of us should so soon be fated to experience the instability of human enjoyments. But it is no matter,” wiping the intrusive tear-drop from his pale cheek, and crossing his hands devoutly on his breast, “*I soon learnt to bend to my necessities, and by the favour of God, to look beyond this sublunary world for my reward and consolation; for Bertoldo, he has long slept in the bosom of his Maker, and is at rest!*”

“*HOLY Father!*” said Viola, “think you that Zanotti was ever acquainted

with the former Marchese?" and the very thought that caused this question, seemed to shrink at its own begetting.

"HE has always been the friend of the present one," answered the Monk evasively, but in a voice more calculated to excite suspicion than to repress it—"he has always been the friend of the present one," he repeated.

"LAURENTINE," said Viola, "had you not better wait in the outer-room, in case any one calls?" Laurentine, not very complacently, closed her mouth, which hitherto had been wide distended, and retired. "And it was on the Eve of San Pietro, that he first gained admission to the Convent?" asked Viola.

"IT was so, my child," answered
Jerome ;

Jerome ; “ it had been one of those days, when, from the fury of the united elements, Nature seemed sinking in the concussion ; I had been, with some of our brethren, on a pilgrimage to the Saint, and not till the evening was far advanced did we return, beaten and deluged by the weather ; the thunder, as the awful vengeance of an offended Deity, rolled tremendously over our heads ; loud howled the blast through the forest, then it died away in low murmuring groans, or discordant whistlings ; the flashes of blue lightening glared ; the pelting of the rain, the dashing of the cataracts, and the violence of the torrents rushing down the rocks, seemed every moment to threaten dissolution to mankind, and thrilled us with horror and despair. I soon joined the brothers assembled in the chapel, and there, prostrate

trate at the foot of the altar, we deprecated the anger of the Almighty ; still the storm raged with unabated fury, and having placed lights round the image of the blessed Mother, many of the community formed into parties in the refectory, others retired to rest, in the hope of losing apprehension in oblivion ; but *I*, for grief loves contemplation, even in a terrific form, hastened to my cell, and extended my soul before that Heaven which incessantly was opening to my sight : Gracious God, what a night it was ! Providence seemed to war upon the clouds, and reproach the treacherous Saint with his Lord's denial. The clock of the chapel had just tolled the half hour past eleven, when in an awful gust of wind, I thought I distinguished a human voice ; I paused, and listened ; again a cessation of the thunder convinced
me

me I was right, for I heard the tinkling of the bell at the Convent gate ; in the confusion occasioned by the storm, the porter, as well as the rest of the brothers, had collected as much as possible into the interior ; I hastened down, therefore, concluding that some benighted traveller needed assistance ; in the idea that distress craved my pity, caution was forgotten, and I hastily unbarred the gate, and threw it open, when a tall figure, covered from head to foot with an immense cloak, rushed in"—and he added, as if overcome by recollection, " that figure was Zannotti !"—"Protect me," he cried " from the malice of the elements, and save me from the pursuits of assassins !"—" He seemed extremely faint, and sunk half down upon the bench, placed for the convenience of strangers, and for the first time gave me a view of his features ;

features; they were such as made an indelible impression on my mind; my child, they are still beyond description, they were then unfathomable! damps, as of death, sat on his livid forehead; his cheek was blanched with emotion, and the cold hand I held between my own, trembled—Heavens, how it trembled! he told me he was unfortunate, that he had been journeying to the Convent, with the intention of becoming one of its members, when he was attacked by robbers in the wood, and with great difficulty escaped. I conducted him to our Superior, with whom he had a long and private interview; shortly after he entered his noviciate, and as soon as possible took the vows.”

“AND his conduct has ever since excited much surprise?” said Viola;
 whose

whose interest was now raised to the highest degree.

“AYE, my child, and I may say suspicion,” replied the good priest, “for misfortunes more commonly soften the feelings than blunt them; now Zanotti is harder than the rock; and from the time he became a member of our society, has never kept up the slightest intercourse with any one here; he avoids all approaches to conversation; books seem to be his sole amusement, and only companions.”

“THINK you he is a religious man?” said Viola.

“No,” replied the Monk, “I do not; he has put on the semblance for interest and convenience, but small, I fear me, is the inward portion; I am convinced

convinced he is a man aching under the oppression of guilty reflections: my cell, before he became Abbate, was next to *his*; there have I heard him, the whole live-long night, pace up and down with hasty and disordered steps; and when he has joined us in the morning duties, it was with looks so haggard and care-worn, as left none in doubt but that the errors of his past life were thus making their atonement."

"How," said Viola, "did it happen that he was made Superior, when there were so many more older brethren?"

"INTEREST, my child," returned the old man. "Soon after he was settled in this Convent, he became intimately acquainted with the Marchese di Morano,

rano, and chosen Confessor to that illustrious family ; by which means, on the death of the old Abbate, he was appointed successor ; but no one more strongly proved that aggrandizement cannot bring peace of mind, than he does ; ever tenacious and distrustful, if he perceive two or three of the brothers engaged together in discourse, he is uneasy and perplexed, nor rests till the party is broken up : since he entered the abbey, I do not think, excepting in his visits to the castle, that he ever went beyond its walls, and then it is always with so much caution and circumspection, as must necessarily fill every mind with conjectures to his disadvantage. I had however forgot, there is a place, where in the close of evening he sometimes retires ; it is to the high craggy point of a rock ;

and

and often as I've passed the road, have I seen him, stretched with his vast length across the pinnacle, apparently lost in the madness of reflection."

"GOOD FATHER," said Viola, "did you never remark that Zanotti always wears the cowl so as to entirely conceal his face?"—"Truly he need not," replied Jerome, "for in the course of seven years, from the time he came to us, he was so altered, both in face and person, that I would have defied his nearest friend to have remembered him; there is still, however, an air of majesty about him nothing can ever alter; he had the finest face I ever saw; and the night I first opened our gate to receive him, I pictured him as the fallen angel; like him, his pride seemed wounded, but not subdued; and as I
marked

marked the furious warfare of the inward passions, I said, "that soul can never be at peace."

AGAIN Viola demanded, if he thought Zanotti had ever any previous connexion with the Albenzi family, ere his religious avocation introduced him to its notice?

To this the Monk replied, he knew not, though he had himself, perhaps superstitiously, connected the date of *his* arrival to a circumstance annexed to *them*. "There is," continued the Friar, with some degree of solemnity, "a prophecy hangs over the house of the Albenzi, which says, that one of its descendants must beware the 'Eve of San Pietro!' 'tis a weak tradition, but yet there are times when the strongest

strongest nerves will yield to these impressions."

"PERHAPS," said Viola, whose mind *did* irresistibly give way to this impression, "perhaps it is already fulfilled; Bertoldo might have perished on that day."

"No, my child," answered Jerome, "if there is any truth in the prediction, it is yet to come; *he* died some time before it. Ah! what a melancholy end that was! to think, that in the space of a few transient hours, himself, his lovely wife, and infant blossom, should all be mouldering in the dust! 'twas a bad business, and if by publishing my opinion, Bertoldo could be raised from the tomb, I should not long have any scruples on the score of——but 'tis no matter"——

“ DOES the present Marchese never visit the seat of his ancestors; good Father?” said Viola.

“ No, daughter,” he answered, shaking his head; “ he has never crossed the threshold but once since the day he left it after his brother’s death; ’twas then by accident, for he was benighted on his road to some other place, and was obliged to stop there.”

——The Monk paused, as if fearful of proceeding; Viola regarded him earnestly; imagination was heated, and she shuddered at the horrible visions it conjured up: she pressed Jerome to proceed; she went farther, she demanded in a faltering accent, “ whether there had ever been reason to imagine that the untimely death of the Marchese”—she hesitated; she dared not finish the sentence.

“ ’Tis

“ ‘Tis hard, my child,” continued the old man, “to speak decidedly on so dreadful a subject : in these bad times, the less is said the better ; still every one has his thoughts, and mine never were favourable to the character of Morano. I have heard, the night he was driven to his own castle for shelter, that his repugnance to enter it was visible to the meanest of his attendants ; that he would have put up at the lowest hovel on the road, in preference, had there been one to have received him ; and it was said”——

“ WHAT !—oh, Father !” said Viola,
 “ what was said ?”

“ THAT as the loud clock of the castle beat the hour of twelve, when all his followers were locked in sleep, that the Marchese darted from his chamber,
 and

and at the door of one of his servants' rooms, sunk down in a strong convulsion: on his recovery he uttered incoherent ravings, and commanded them to tear the blasting object from his pillow. Oh, my child! those were dark words; they savoured of wicked deeds, and I fear are marked in jetty characters on his heart. The care of the castle was given in charge to one Corvino, a man who once lived in the service of the Marchese at Naples; him I have seen, and I think, if his looks do not belie him, he is capable of executing any crime the vices of his employer may require."

At the conclusion of this speech, Laurentine entered the room, saying Bernardo had been walking about the gallery for some time, and as he was now gone to fetch a light, she thought

Jerome had better depart, while the darkness would conceal him : to this the Friar assented, bidding her to be of good cheer ; and assuring her, that while she continued innocent and virtuous, God would bless her ! Viola pressed his hand to her lips, and as the warm tear of gratitude fell on his withered palm, Jerome still felt that disappointment had not yet quite chilled the tide of sensibility within his breast.

ON the next morning, at an early hour, the Marchese di Morano, after an absence of four months, arrived once more at his castle. Notwithstanding the success of his plan in keeping Albenza from his mother, his mind was ill at ease ; the foreigner he had encountered at Montebino's still followed him in idea ; and while he tried to lull himself into a false security, gnawing and
corroding

corroding reflections incessantly haunted him. On his arrival, he sent for Bianca, and enquired on what day the Marchesa died; by this means endeavouring to disguise, that when he gave orders for her hasty funeral, he was ignorant of the time of her decease: this subterfuge was however easily seen through by the housekeeper, who, after giving her Lord the necessary information, could not forbear muttering her opinion on the subject. The Marchese was not at the present calculated to listen to animadversions of this nature with patience; but while he spurned the humble reprover from his presence, the still, though more forcible monitor within, was repelled in vain. He spent the remainder of the day in solitude and silence; for artful as he was, he feared trusting himself even to the observation of his own servants.

Night approached; the deep tolling bell of the convent, as it beat slowly its awful summons to the cold remains of his hapless wife, struck like lead upon his soul, while the cries and lamentations which revibrated from all parts of the mansion, sounded as denunciations against himself. He traversed his apartment, the pale moon beamed upon his countenance, and the large mirror reflected him to himself; this was too much, conscience was triumphant! and he turned from the reflection faint and motionless. Again the note of death floated on the breeze, as the low voices of the brethren chaunted a requiem to the departed spirit. He then distinctly heard footsteps over his head; they were removing the body of the Marchesa, for he observed a procession of the Monks winding down the mountain to meet it. He now dis-

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tinguished

extinguished the voice of Zanotti in prayer; Morano was frantic! "Oh sound accursed!" he wildly exclaimed, "but for thee I might have been happy!—Yet oh, no!" he added, throwing himself on the ground in an agony of mental suffering, "there is no happiness on earth; no world in Heaven!—yet why am I not happy?" He added, after a moment's pause, "Hell! thou vapour of canting priestcraft, I fear thee not! Cleance can rise no more; Bertoldo sleeps, sleeps in peace, and"—he started! for his door was at that moment softly opened, and a form, light "as the feathered gossamer," glided past him; one hand enfolded the drapery over its breast, while the other held open a thin white veil, that waved around it. "Horror! perdition!" uttered the affrighted Marchese, half suffocated with terror;

“ *there is a Hell, avenging God ! there is a punishment, and thou—thou—art sent to blast me with conviction !*” A faint scream, as the figure tottered to a seat, recalled his scattered ideas, and he flew towards it : it was Viola, who, anxious to obtain one last look of her lost friend, and finding the other apartments locked, had ventured (hearing no noise,) to cross the chamber of the Marchese. Now wildly she gazed around, and involuntarily covered her face with her hands.

“ PARDON me, my Lord !” she at last articulated, “ I beseech your forgiveness ; the entrance to the great stair-case is bolted, and I did not imagine you would now have been here.”

Morano still grasped her arm ; still continued to examine, with a look of eagerness and dismay, a countenance

which

which a moment before he had supposed to have been that of an immaterial being. “Begone!” he at length exclaimed, in a voice smothered by emotions; “leave me this moment!—“Yet stay,” he added, “you shall not till you have heard my will; till you promise submission to my commands. Albenza loves you! mark me, he loves you! but beware, fond girl, beneath his honied words, his soft endearments, death lurks in ambush! remember, the lynx cannot outdo me in watchfulness; and your every look is noted and observed.”

“HEAR me, my Lord!” replied Viola, “I shall soon be beyond the reach of your unjust suspicions; for do not think I am so base a thing as to remain a dependant under a roof where I have no claims for either ten-

derness or protection. Pity," she added, tears streaming down her cheeks, "it is true, I did hope to have met with."

A rustling close by the door, warned her that the bier of the Marchesa was now passing by. "Let me go, my Lord!" she cried wildly; "let me obtain but *one* more transient look of those beloved remains, and I will bless you!" The Marchese still held her. "My mother! my lost adored parent! thou art gone for ever! for ever! oh, for ever! farewell!"

"*SHE was thy mother then,*" answered the Marchese, hastily catching at her last words: "it is well; 'tis but as I conjectured, and yet you would encourage the wretched Albenza in his mad addresses!"

"Oh God!" cried Viola, frantickly
placing

placing her hand before his mouth; “ what is it that you utter ? Oh, my Lord ! that you should have a heart so vile, so cowardly, as thus to trample on a defenceless woman ! My mother ! true, she was one to me ! but the chaste parent who gave you to life, was not more pure or faithful. Witness Heaven !” she continued, sinking on her knees, and raising her hands ; “ as firmly as I do believe the virtuous breast finds its reward within thy mighty kingdom, so firmly do I think I am not her offspring.”

“ To whom then,” said the Marchese, “ do you owe your being ? for no vulgar stock could give existence to so proud a spirit ; it were better, therefore, that you made a friend of me ; a free, unlimited confidence, may place it in my power to serve you, but

mystery and concealment can only gain you enemies."

"ALAS, my Lord!" replied Viola, "you know as much of my parents as I myself do; would to God I had never had them."

MORANO was silent; for as he watched the workings of her noble and ingenuous countenance, truth was so legibly written, that he could not distrust her; her connexion with the Marchesa had often been a subject for much reflection in his own mind. To Zanotti he had communicated his suspicions on the occasion, but to his great surprise, had always found him cold and reserved on delivering his opinion in return, while such is the strength of innocence and integrity, that for a moment all his anger and
resentment

resentment was disarmed ; he forgot that she was the dangerous object of his son's affections, and he only beheld an amiable unfortunate young woman, who had the strongest claims on his protection and generosity. There are few minds indeed so bad, as not at times to experience the power of virtue ; and Morano had frequently trembled at the striking contrast presented by this sentiment, to the tenor of his accustomed thoughts ; the creature of impulse, his very best qualities had degenerated from the excess in which he had first exercised them ; through life, every principle had been sacrificed to each violent gratification by turns ; and those very faults, which in youth had arisen from the vivid impetuosity of passions and feelings, had hardened at length into a

stern apathetic system, callous to each consideration of justice and rectitude.

“I HAVE neither time nor inclination at present,” he said, addressing himself to his affrighted auditor, “to enter into circumstances which I rather think had better for ever remain under the cloud that now obscures them; but,” he added sternly, “dare not to leave the castle; for can you imagine me weak enough to open the cage to one bird, only to tempt the other to fly after: young woman, beware how you excite my indignation! I expect visitors of importance shortly at the castle, and it is my will that you prepare to receive, with respect and attention, the Lady Olivia di Montebino.”——Saying this, he motioned with his hand for her to leave him; and Viola rejoiced at a
dismission,

dismissal, and unable to reply, hastened to her own apartment. There she gave vent to her sorrow; there bewailed the hardness of her destiny; lamented her benefactress; and sat fondly reflecting on Albenza, dearer than ever to her heart. In a state of torpid melancholy, she had remained at her lattice nearly two hours; had watched the mourning servants of the Marchesa returning by torch light from her funeral, and the receding procession of Nuns and Friars; this instantly recalled the promise made to the Marchesa, and the lowered as were her spirits by the events of the day, she felt anxious to lose no time in fulfilling it: still she could not reflect, without the strongest repugnance to destroying mementos, which by one single glance might develop the mystery that hung over her.

Again

Again the image of Zanotti stood before her, and his words so dark, so unintelligible, rose to her remembrance. "My death, or my destruction!" repeated Viola, shuddering; "then death awaits me! What have I done to be thus hardly fated? Alas! too surely in me is verified, oh Providence! thy awful mandate! in me, the child suffers for its parents' frailties." Another hour past, and still was she irresolute; to enter the recent chamber of death, at the solemnity of midnight, was a trial that required more fortitude, than one so enfeebled by grief and dejection, might readily be supposed to possess; that she was a prisoner at the will of the Marchese, flashed on her with dreadful force; that she was destined to be the humble companion of the haughty Olivia, wounded her to the soul; and tenderly as she loved Albenza,

za, when she thought on the evils attendant on a further residence with him, she would have almost given up the chance of seeing him again, to avoid the pangs to which she knew further meetings must subject them. In this manner did she continue to muse on her situation, till the same heavy foot-step that had disturbed her the night before, was heard again ; hastily she ran to the closet, deposited her lamp, and flew to the lattice : it was indeed the Monk Zanotti, though not the stranger with him ; he was now in earnest conversation with the Marchese, who seemed agitated and alarmed.

“ HE has qualms of conscience then,” said Morano : “ on my life ! it’s fit he should betake himself to praying now ; and so he might, my friend,

friend, but that these whining sinners are wont to think confession a salvo that wipes away old scores."

ZANOTTI now answered, but in so low a tone, as to render every thing he said unintelligible. At length the Marchese exclaimed in an angry voice, "Would he were in his grave! there is the best repentance!"—To this a pause succeeded for several minutes, when Zanotti said, "Look well to the cottage good Morano, that holds a damning proof, a proof"—They now moved onward, but she thought as the moon-beam fell on the countenance of Zanotti, she had never beheld it more ghastly. She was prevented further reflection, by the entrance of Bianca, who, returned from the interment of her Lady, came to relate the sad particulars.

"ALL

“ALL is over, Signiora !” said the old woman, wiping her eyes ; “ I saw her quietly laid in the earth, and she is now in Heaven, where my Lord, the Marchese, I’m sure will never go.”

“ No more of that, Bianca,” replied Viola, “ our comments cannot remedy the evil : did the Abbate Zanotti attend the funeral ?”

“ No, Signiora,” answered Bianca, “ he went, immediately after he had finished praying by the body, to the chamber of my Lord, and I heard after that, both went out together.”

VIOLA now asked, if the Signior was in the castle ? Bianca informed her, he had visited the chamber of his mother, and then shutting himself
up

up in his study, had retired from all observation. "I am going presently," she continued, "to open the doors leading through the great stair-case to the Marchesa's suite of rooms, but I declare I'm quite fearful to venture alone; for my part, I can see no reason for its ever having been closed."

VIOLETA, who felt assured, by this intelligence, she could now execute her purpose, remonstrated with Bianca on her weakness; promising, however, if it would make her more at ease, that she would accompany her: tho' scarcely had the words escaped her lips, ere she remembered the form she had beheld the night preceding the Marchesa's death, and half repented her offer: yet if she feared with a companion, what would she do an hour hence,

hence, when all the family would be at rest, and far removed from her hearing ! Taking therefore the arm of Bianca, they soon accomplished the important task of unbarring the great door. “ I do assure you, Signiora,” said the housekeeper, as they returned to Viola’s chamber, “ my fears are not without some foundation ; I slept last night in my dear Lady’s dressing-room, and after I had been in bed some time, heard a kind of noise on the great stair-case ; I listened, fancying it might be the wind ; but soon it came again, louder than before ! there I lay, shivering and shaking ; till thinking perhaps some one might have been taken ill, I resolved to summon up courage, and see what it could be : I had just got to the door, and to be sure *I* made no little noise in my fright, for I overturned a table and

two

two chairs; when, oh Signiora! just as I got to the door, Santa Marie! never shall I forget it, a dark figure shot by me quicker than lightning: after that, the sounds ceased, and all became still; and for my part I can only say, I would not go up that stair-case after dark again, for all the wealth of the world. Holy Virgin! it certainly was my Lord Bertoldo; it does not signify talking, but he can no more rest in his grave, than the present Marchese can in his bed." During this relation, Viola had experienced a variety of sensations: she felt there was but too much truth in the account, for it was exactly the same appearance which had so much alarmed her before, and now filled her mind with perplexity; yet, to defer burning the papers, would not only subject her to
the

the self-accusation of having neglected the commands of her friend, but, perhaps, put into the possession of others, that secret, on the concealment of which, she had been told her life and fate depended. Bianca was now called away, by the bell summoning to supper in the hall; and Viola was once more left to arrange her present proceedings and future plans. She looked through the lattice, but the Marchese and Zanotti were both gone; and as the sight of where she had observed them, brought back the conversation to her remembrance, she could not but feel they were mutually accomplices in deeds of blood and atrocity, and capable of the most heinous crimes: while Jerome's history of the Abbate still further astonished and confounded her; and the more she reflected, the
more

more ardently did she long to discover any clue to her own origin, that might prove it impossible for her to be in any way connected with this extraordinary man.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

“ ’Tis now the very witching time of night,
When church-yards yawn.”

SHAKESPEARE.

VIOLETTA remained at her window till she heard the receding footsteps of the servants retiring to their several apartments ; the air blew keen, and closing the lattice, she seated herself by the fire she had had the precaution to have kindled, in order to destroy the papers. Her only apprehension now was the fear of awakening the Marchese, and thereby excite his suspicion as to her motives for visiting the apartments at that hour of the night ; opening her door, she found he was yet stirring,
and

and clearly distinguished his voice and Zanotti's in earnest conversation in the saloon. It was already turned eleven, while every passing minute but increased her fears, and strengthened her emotions. The night was not tempestuous, yet gloomy and cold ; the wind faintly echoed round the building, and she turned pale, as the owl hooted from the woods, or the ominous bat beat against her casement. To divert her attention, she had recourse to another search of the Marchesa's desk, and most carefully examined every part, in the hope of discovering some concealed drawer, or recess, wherein the letter might be hid ; but it was to no purpose, and only ended in additional uneasiness and astonishment at the enigmatical manner in which she had been deprived of them. With a beating heart she heard the great portal clash
loudly

loudly on its hinges and shut out Zannotti; soon after the Marchese passed by to his chamber, and all became quiet as the grave; still it was expedient to wait a short period, lest any watchful person might be disturbed, and betray her movements. This intermediate space was spent in all the agitation that ever exists 'between the acting of a dreadful thing, and the first motion.'—"Perhaps," she cried, her mind giving way to the superstition of the moment, "it is but too true, that the mangled form of Bertoldo now walks the castle! Protect me, mighty Heaven! in this solemn hour, and give me strength to fulfil the task enjoined me with fortitude and courage! and thou, blessed Spirit of my lost and only friend, if thou art permitted to look down from thy celestial abode, to view so low, so frail a

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thing as I am, guard and watch over me! ye too, misguided and unhappy parents, beloved in idea, though unknown in existence, behold your child, and may that child's misfortunes and concessions be received at the throne of mercy and forgiveness, as a full atonement for your faults; and may the tear of regret and supplication, which now falls humbly before my God, efface your errors from off the record of his justice!" She arose from this appeal with renovated assurance, and strong in the possession of conscious innocence, took her lamp, and cautiously unclosing the door, quitted her apartment. Again a restrained murmuring of the wind struck cold and chilly to her sense; her lamp, as she passed the large window, emitted but a faint and feeble ray, threatening every instant to expire, and leave her
in

in total darkness. She now drew her veil around it, thinking by this means not only to preserve her light, but also to obscure herself. The clock beat heavily the midnight hour, and the trembling Viola involuntarily turned her eyes from the lengthened mist of the gallery, where she could not help fancying that the same dark form, before witnessed, now pursued her. Shivering, she reached the bed-room of the Marchesa, and overcome by apprehension, wept, and was leaning against the wainscot for support, when a low, repressed groan, from within, caused her to start from her position, and hasten forwards with the utmost velocity. Arrived at the foot of the great stair-case, leading to the deserted gallery of the late Marchesa, her terrors rapidly increased in the recollection, that it was here the awful figure had

disappeared, and faint almost to sinking, she was half inclined to give up the pursuit this night and return to her own room ; but the commands of her benefactress, together with the strong necessity she herself felt for their completion ; and above all, a sense of shame for the cowardly sentiment she experienced, impelled her on, and determined her to execute her purpose ; she therefore ascended the stairs which brought her directly to the bow-window, where she had indulged her melancholy contemplations the night before the Marchesa died. The scene, though not so terrific, was not less solemn and impressive ; the blast mourned in hollow vibration, and the distant glimmer of the glow-worm's light served only to render the excessive darkness more visible. Viola, however, who had resolved not to be now
shaken

shaken by any local circumstances, continued to ascend the stairs, which she had just concluded, when a voice that sounded, as one more than mortal, pronounced these words in a sepulchral whisper, "Enter not the chamber of sin and death!" Viola was horror-struck; she clung round the balustrade, and, without uttering a word, covered her face with her veil; she would have flown, but a supernatural impulse seemed to chain her feet; she would have called, but her tongue was bereft of speech, and articulation gone: in this position, therefore, did she remain nearly five minutes, when once more a heavy groan was repeated, and then all was still again; not a step was heard, not a breath, save that of the wind, broke the dreadful silence, or communicated one ray of consolation to the bosom of the wretched girl,

who now felt that only by making the most violent effort, her senses could be preserved amidst this gloomy horror; and notwithstanding the tremendous interdiction which still rung upon her ear, she resolved, if possible, to gain the destined chamber, and at every hazard learn the worst; offering up, therefore, a fervent ejaculation, she proceeded along the gallery with as much quickness as her trembling limbs would permit: "Of sin!" she repeated, as her hand unlocked the door of the Marchesa's anti-chamber; "this hallowed spot can never be the receptacle of sin, and why should I fear death?" With poignant anguish did she gaze on every relick of her departed friend; her books, her drawings, the plants, nurtured by her care, were each dwelt on with sorrowful tenderness, and bedewed with the tear-drop of remembrance;

the rosary she had worn round her neck, received the soft emprintment of Viola's kiss, and was tied with almost religious veneration on her own; her cast-off garment, yet hanging on a chair, was folded with fervour to her heart, and the soothing satisfaction experienced at this melancholy reviewal, for a moment dissipated every late sensation of horror from her mind. After some time spent in this mournful employment, she entered the bed-room; there stood the bier on which the body had been laid, the pall which had been thrown over, and the aromatic herbs and flowers with which her servants had strewed her venerated remains. Viola enclosed the sable covering in her arms, and again a shower of grief fell to the recollection of her she lamented. Much as she had suffered since the loss of her benefactress, her

pangs had never been keener than at this moment, and the anarchy of feelings that warred within her breast, almost overpowered her harassed frame; never before had a sense of her situation stood exhibited in such terrible array; every incident that had occurred within this short interval of time, the hidden speeches of the Monk Zanotti, the harrowing conversation she had overheard with the Marchese and the stranger; the still more appalling words just addressed to herself; and ‘last, though not least,’ the mysterious woman at the cottage, who now, more than ever, she concluded as bearing some relation to the Albenzi family: all these combined at once to distract and bewilder her.

“GREAT God!” she exclaimed, falling on her knees, and resting her head

head on the bier, “who am I? what black and fatal thread weaves my harsh destiny, and conjures up these omens of misfortune? Gracious Providence! in mercy disclose the dreadful secret that envelopes me, or take back a life most loathed and burthensome: Preserve me!” she cried, looking wildly round; “yet, oh preserve me from the crime of murmuring at thy will, or repining at thy pleasure! Grant me patience—patience, and the welfare of Albenza, is all I ask on earth!” Her head sunk upon the bier, and for some time she continued weeping in this posture, for the images which were now engraven on her weakened spirits, were not to be effaced, either by the force of prayer or reflection; and with her hands clasped, and raised to Heaven, she continued to mourn in hopeless agony: “Alas!” she added, drawing the key

of the cabinet from her bosom, and rivetting her eyes upon it; “eventful instrument! that could so soon bring certainty, perhaps comfort, to my soul, why is thine aid withheld? Oh thou betrayer of dark hidden deeds! thou dumb detainer of ill-gotten wealth! thou senseless tool! whose slight talismanic touch can bring each darkened history to light—why do I clench thee, prompting to a use, and yet must burst in ignorance?——I cannot bear this torture!” she continued, grasping the key between both her hands, “What may this mean? Great Providence, who am I?”

“THE child of guilt and murder!” answered the same petrifying voice that had before spoken; and Viola, unknowing what she did, rushed forwards to the spot from whence it seemed

ed to issue, which was the closet in the dressing-room that contained the cabinet: "Let me," she frantickly exclaimed, "then fulfil my vow, and die!" With a hand trembling in every joint, she hastily unlocked the closet door, seized on the cabinet, and applied the key; it was a piece of curious workmanship, and contained a variety of drawers and recesses: these, however, she quickly passed over in her eagerness to find the one mentioned by the Marchesa as the repository of the papers; and with feelings too powerful for utterance or description, pressed on the spring; but the shock of palsy seemed to fasten on her frame, when, on opening the drawer, she perceived it to be entirely empty; every place, every corner, every part of the cabinet did she explore in vain; breathless, examined the key, the lock,

the spring, but no marks of pressure or violence was evident; they were the same as had been specified by the Marchesa, and of so peculiar a construction as to render any deception impracticable: the idea that this brought with it was insupportable; and uttering a faint scream, she sunk down at the foot of the cabinet, stupified and motionless: here she remained nearly a quarter of an hour, till nature gradually submitted to its own efforts, and she recovered: at first, concluding it had been a dream, she looked around, not knowing where she was; but the sight of the closet, and the open cabinet, soon restored her to recollection, and a cold shivering, and dizziness of the head, made her fear a relapse into her former state of insensibility; to avoid this, she arose from the ground, and once more examined the cabinet, though

though every instant dreading some invisible hand would arrest her search, and dash her from the spot. Convinced, at length, there was nothing to hope, that the packet had never been placed there; or, what was more probable, had by some mysterious agent been conveyed away; she returned it to its former situation, locked the door, and put the key into her bosom. During this, all had been perfect quiet; no step, no sound returned, that could authorise her conjectures of some one being within the apartments; that all she had heard and seen was the effect of supernatural agency, the natural strength of her understanding led her to condemn; yet that all things were possible to God, was an axiom she firmly credited; though, that he should display the omnipotence of his power to a being so humble as herself, was a
sup-

supposition she considered as at once impious and absurd; that she was the peculiar care of Heaven, the modesty of her nature deemed incredible; but that she could be abandoned to the dominion of evil spirits, was a reflection innate goodness convinced her to be equally so; she had then certainly some unknown friend or enemy in the world, who was acquainted with her history, and who must have some interest in her fate; yet how this person (whoever they might be,) could have gained access to these apartments, or to the castle, at such an hour, overwhelmed her with surprise and astonishment: that some inexplicable events marked her existence, was incontrovertible; and that she was exposed to unforeseen and inevitable disasters, made her recoil with increased antipathy from the thought of residing longer at Morano.

Unable

Unable to move, from the agitation under which she laboured, the loud clock from the turret beat heavily the first hour of the morn ere she remembered a longer continuance in her present situation might be productive of ill consequences, and she darted through the rooms with all the swiftness of one who every moment expected to be pursued. When she reached the head of the stair-case, where the voice had first sounded, her eyes closed, and her hands convulsively clenched together; her fears, however, suffered no farther confirmation, and she once more reached her own apartment in safety.

WHEN she sat down, and began to reflect on what had passed, she was again nearly tempted to believe she was still under the illusion of a dream, though

though a flood of tears, while it came opportunely to her relief, in calming the perturbation of her spirits, only more strongly proved there had indeed been too much of reality in what she had suffered; with the deepest sorrow, she beheld herself, by the unfortunate death of her friend, completely in the trammels of the Marchese; who but wanted a convenient opportunity to make her feel his power, and endure his persecutions; yet after much and fruitless meditation, Viola, as she gazed on the boundary of her own little apartment, could not help feeling comparatively tranquil and serene; and notwithstanding the horrors she had experienced, and the ills which still seemed to threaten her; such is the divine influence of virtue on the mind, that after piously recommending herself to Providence, she sunk on her couch

couch into a quiet and refreshing slumber.

ALBENZA, in the mean while, had enjoyed but little rest; for the funeral of his mother had so called forth his indignation, both towards his father and Zanotti, that his whole night was spent in resolutions to resist the commands of the latter, and revolving a thousand schemes of happiness with Viola, not doubting, that could he obtain another interview, he should finally succeed in persuading her to adopt his measures, and accept his hand: in hopes of this, he left his sleepless pillow by the break of dawn, and as he knew her first employment was to visit his mother's favourite plants in the viranda, hastened to the saloon, and had recourse to a book: the very study, however, to which he applied, recalled

recalled so forcibly the recollection of that mother to his mind, that his sight became dim, himself agitated, and his resentment again kindling towards the Marchese.

THE door, however, was soon softly opened, and Viola entered, but not so as to perceive Albenza, who, out in the viranda, was obscured by the quantity of shrubs and flowers that formed almost a grove around the window: to observe her motions, to watch unseen each look of her, so tenderly beloved, was a pleasure he had not strength to deprive himself of; and silently he kept his post, while Viola seated herself at the table, and opened the book Albenza had just discarded: it seemed, however, to produce the same effect on her feelings as it had before done on her lover's; for after
turning

turning over the pages, she threw it mournfully away, and while the tears chased each other down her face, called on the beloved names of Albenza and his mother, deploring the cruelty of that lot, which must for ever banish her from love and happiness. This was a moment Albenza could resist no longer; bursting from his retreat, he knelt at her feet, and “conjured her to fly with him that moment: Good God! Viola,” he added, after he had concluded an argument, as rapid as it was sincere, “can your goodness of heart and disposition hesitate for a moment at conferring felicity on the man who would lay down his existence for you, by agreeing to a request, which I am sure will ensure certain and lasting comfort to us both? My wishes, my views, are moderate; yet, dare I say so, when I aspire to your love?

But

But I mean, that peace is not dependant upon rank, nor happiness on riches ; and a life of active employment would be infinitely preferable to me, than is that indolent routine of grandeur and dissipation, where the mind sinks into enervation, for want of proper uses to apply itself. Oh, my love ! drive me not to endless sorrow ; remember my feelings are but too keen, too impetuous ; and all my hopes of joy, on this side Heaven, in you are centered ! Here," he continued, placing his mother's letter in her hand, " read this, and then either consent to be my own, or let us part for ever !"

THE letter, as it may be supposed, did not produce exactly those effects on Viola, which the ardent imagination of Albenza had led him to hope ; with that propriety, so inherent in her nature,

nature, she saw it instantly in the light it had been written; "Nor can I think," she said, "that when the Marchesa expressed a wish for your marriage, she had the smallest idea of my ever becoming your wife; and trust me, dear Albenza, I know too well the rectitude of her decisions, to think for a moment she could form a system of conduct for her darling son on so precarious a foundation, as an unequal and disproportioned union: believe me, you are now suffering inclination to subdue judgment, reason, and principle, whose dictates unprejudiced reflection will prove you have too much disregarded. You must be aware, after the very candid avowals I have made of my sentiments, that nothing but a sense of right could deter me from becoming (what I should consider as your wife) the happiest of women."

At

At the conclusion of these words, the tears which involuntarily trembled in her eyes, convinced her a longer conversation might lead her to retract that which she knew it was her duty to persevere in, and she was preparing to quit the room, when Zanotti entered it. Notwithstanding the conscious purity of her intentions, and the virtuous self-denial she had practised, Viola felt, at this unexpected sight of the Monk, that she could have sunk into the earth, to avoid the fixed expression of his scrutinizing gaze, for his look spoke volumes to them both. Calmly he seated himself by the vi-randa, drew a book from his pocket, and began to read. This was an interruption beyond the patience of Albenza to support, even in his coolest moments; he therefore approached Zanotti, regardless of the beseeching
looks

looks of Viola, and in a proud and determined tone, desired to be informed of his motives for thus intruding on their privacy; requesting, while his whole face glowed with indignation, that he would immediately quit the apartment. An implacable malevolence was one of the peculiar characteristics of the Monk, and an injury once received, a word inadvertently escaped, or a look that could be construed as meant to his own disadvantage, was never forgotten, rarely, if ever, unrevenged. The young Albenza had always been, particularly, an object of dislike to him; probably from his perceiving he had never been kindly regarded by the latter, whose vivacity of disposition could not obscure that discernment which completely saw through the reserved and morose habits of the Confessor, whom
 he

he always considered as the adviser of the Marchese, and a man of dangerous, though guarded propensities: at all times, therefore, they were but little inclined to act amicably towards each other; and the idea of his appearing to come then, for the purpose of noting his interview with Viola, was in itself sufficient to excite all the rage of Albenza, who to Zanotti's steady and obstinate silence, still continued to oppose threats and reproaches. Moved at length by his violence, the Abbate rose from his chair, and with that air of humility and forbearance he knew so well how to assume, said, in accents of affected moderation,

“Is it well, my son, thus to load with invective and indignity, the man, whose holy function (independent of the parental regard he bears towards
 2 you,)

you,) should protect him from insult and profanation? Or is it having a just conception of right, thus to condemn in me a conduct, for which your gratitude alone ought to be excited? Young man, you stand upon a tottering foundation; and the pinnacle of your rash desires may prove the climax of despair and horror! For you" he continued, turning to Viola, who, without strength to support herself, had yet not power to quit the room; "are past admonition, and callous to reproof. Say, are my words so weak, my character so puerile, as for you to suppose I utter without motive, or warn without necessity? Did I not tell you, one false step would dash you down the precipice to atoms? Have you forgotten"—

"I HAVE not, Father!" interrupted

Albenza, warmly, “that the Signiora is by a mother bequeathed to my protection, and that by every thing dear to me will I fulfil the trust most sacredly, and guard her from insult with my blood.”

“YES !” answered Zanotti, “nobly you fulfil the duty of a son, by running counter to your father’s wishes ! your mother ought to have foreseen the misery she entailed upon her family, when”——

“LEAVE me !” interrupted Albenza, supporting Viola with one arm, as he drew his sword with the other ; “haughty priest, this instant quit the castle, or dread all that my open chastisement can inflict !——Droop not, my dearest,” gazing on Viola ; “Heaven and love shall guard thee ! For
you,”

you," he continued, then turning to Zanotti, "who, cloaked within a garb of subtle sanctity, think with impunity to feed on the credulity of your employers, I fear no threats from *you*! I need no favours,—for those who groan beneath the burden of pent-up guilt, who act from sinister and base designs, seek victims and tools, good Father: I am a man, accountable to none but God, and the legate he has stationed within my own bosom!"

"Not to thy father! miscreant?" said the Marchese, who had overheard part of the conversation, and now broke into the room; "not to thy parent, abandoned boy! Hear me," he proceeded, while his face grew livid from contending passions; "I have pledged my honour for you to the Conte di Montebino; and by all that's great, I

swear thou shalt receive the wife I offer thee ! or that minion——but you know me, Albenza,—know it is useless to tamper with me thus, or expect I will revoke my decision.”

“MY Lord !” said Viola, sinking on her knees before him, “listen to me, I conjure you ; oh hold, my heart, soon thou must be at peace ! oh hold, while now I swear solemnly—swear to renounce”——

“VIOLA !” exclaimed Albenza, seizing her hand with a violence that terrified her, “beware of what you do !——remember I do not live to hear you say you will renounce me ! repeat the words, and the death warrant of Albenza is signed irrevocably.”

“BEGONE !” vociferated the Mar-
1 chese ;

chese ; and Viola, casting a look of tenderness and supplication on Albenza, hastened from the room ; while Zanotti now approached, and in accents of feigned conciliation, exhorted him to give up his present pursuit ; and submitting to the will of his father, receive his destined bride with affection and respect. But to every argument he advanced on the occasion, Albenza only replied, that he never would espouse any other woman than Viola : and in a manner at once dignified and resolute, begged to decline the officious good offices of Zanotti, as he required neither his mediation nor advice. During this conversation, the Marchese, unable, from the fury of his mind, to reason calmly with his son, had preserved a sullen silence ; trusting, that in the absence of Viola the plausibility of Zanotti might produce the desired

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effect.

effect. How then was he enraged, on finding that son, hitherto so obedient, steadily adhering to his determination, and firm and immoveable in his refusal. Situated as he was too with the Conte di Montebino at this period, he above all things dreaded his discovering Albenza's aversion to the marriage, as he had already written to assure him of his acquiescence, and his own desire to receive them as soon as possible at the castle, that their nuptials might be speedily concluded. How to act, therefore, he knew not: not that he would have hesitated a moment on the cruelty of immuring Viola in a convent for life, but that he feared the fond and enterprising Albenza would not rest, till he had discovered her concealment: and as he knew it would require some time ere she could take the veil, he dared not hazard so probable a consequence.

quence. To keep her therefore immediately under his own observation, seemed at present the most prudent plan; and if, after the arrival of Montebino, Albenza still continued steady in opposition, he trusted to a consultation with Zanotti, to prevent an union he was resolved never should take place. He now thought it more politic to assume an appearance of moderation towards Albenza, whom he reminded of the duties incumbent on his character, as a son; and on those annexed to his situation, as the last of an ancient and illustrious family: while Zanotti, whose plans were not yet ripe for action, departed, though not before his malignant glance had been marked by Albenza, whose open and ingenuous nature was but a weak match against the subtle devices of those with whom he had to contend. Yet ever brave

and intrepid, he thought not for himself; for Viola alone he feared, for her he trembled when he considered the lengths to which his merciless and vindictive parent might be carried: unable to conceal the emotions these reflections excited, he left the room; not, however, before he besought the compassion of the Marchese towards the innocent Viola, though he still firmly declared against receiving the hand of Olivia.

It may now be in some measure requisite to account for the entrance of the Marchese at so early an hour. From the instant of his arrival at Morano, Bernardo had been appointed a spy over the actions of his son, with strict orders to prevent any private meetings with Viola. The man he had fixed upon was indeed well calculated
to

to fill this office: for such was the malice of his heart, that he delighted in the task, particularly against Viola, whom he disliked for befriending Gradisca, long the object of his persecution, from her tenanting a spot he was desirous of obtaining for himself.

SCARCELY had Viola reached her own apartment, before Laurentine entered with a sorrowful countenance, saying, she was the messenger of heavy tidings from the Marchese; for he had commanded her to inform her that she was on no account to quit her room, without his permission; and that Laurentine, who would attend her, was never to leave it, without previously fastening the door on the outside; that she was to receive neither letter nor message, nor hold converse with any one in the castle, on pain of his

severest displeasure: and “dear Signiora,” said the servant, “if he finds that you prefer me to any of the other servants, he will instantly set a fresh guard over you: so pray be cautious, and don’t speak a word, if a soul is within hearing. I always feared, for my part, it would come to this; and it’s all through that barbarous old Friar, who will as surely go to the Devil as the greatest sinner on earth. Holy Virgin, Signiora! there’s been such a hurley-burley in the hall too; and only because Bianca let fall something, as that there was more in the death of the late Marchese than every one dreamt of: and so Bernardo, who heard the conversation, reported it directly to my Lord, upon which he sends for her into his presence, (trembling and shaking enough, I warrant, for she was frightened out of her senses,)

senses,) and commanded her to quit the castle this very night. After living so many years in his family, I wonder he could have the heart to do it: I declare it's a heinous shame; and all for what too? Speaking the truth, Signiora; for true it is, I doubt not."

VIOLETTA had attended to this information with that serenity a good and dignified mind always experiences, when suffering under the pressure of unmerited misfortunes; she could not, however, avoid feeling, that the sacrifice she had offered, in her rejection of Albenza, ill deserved this harsh return from his father. Of him she was now afraid to enquire, for she was but too certain their happiness mutually depended on each other; and in the idea of renouncing her claims to his heart, she felt her own peace was for ever

G 6

buried;

buried; of the old housekeeper she could not think, without sorrow and resentment; and after thanking Laurentine for her counsel, and promising faithfully to abide by it, she besought her to bring Bianca to her apartment before she went away; not without a hope, that in charging her with a message to the Abbess of the Santa Ursulina, (from whom she began to wonder she had not heard,) she might thereby effect her deliverance.

LAURENTINE declared she would do her best, not only because she loved Viola, but that she experienced the greatest pleasure in spiting the Marchese and Zanotti, who she knew was at the bottom of it all. "But do send a word of comfort to the Signior," cried the waiting-maid, as she opened the door. Viola sighed, and looking earnestly in
her

her face, asked, what comfort she could send, who was bereft of every source of it in herself?

THIS was too much for the tender-hearted Laurentine; who declaring, that true love was always doomed to suffer in this world, sobbed out, that she should never want a friend while *her* humble means could assist her, and left the room.

CHAP. IV.

“ Oh God ! I have an ill-divining soul,
My mind misgives some consequence, yet
hanging in the stars.”

SHAKESPEARE.

DURING the rest of a day spent in total solitude, Viola had recourse to her usual occupations, to divert the melancholy that preyed upon her mind ; that her condition was more desolate than ever, she was assured ; but she felt also, in proportion as her trials increased, her strength and fortitude ought to be called forth. Idleness was the food of sorrow, and only increased the despondency it could never alleviate ; she passed therefore an hour

in work, another in reading, and when these began to weary, took her lute, and soon acknowledged its magic influence on her spirits! Did she but know Albenza to be happy, and been allowed the privilege of air and exercise, Viola thought she could now quietly submit to vegetate through the remainder of a life, on which the canker-worm of disappointment had so early fastened. As the evening approached, she became restless and uneasy, and could not help wishing it was in her power to visit the cottage of Gradisca, who was often in her thoughts, and whose story she was most desirous to be informed of. Darkness was now coming on, and she began to feel impatient for the appearance of Laurentine. There is a certain portion of solitude requisite for the heart to tranquilize its griefs; beyond
it,

it, is dreadful ; and of all miseries, that of repressed uncommunicated anguish, is the most insupportable. In about half an hour the key moved in the door, and to the great surprise of our heroine, Bianca stood before her : her eyes were swelled with weeping, and scarcely did she seem able to support her aged frame.

“SIGNIORA,” said the faithful old servant, “I dare not stop one instant ; my Lord and the Abbate have just gone forth towards the valley, and I resolved therefore to try and bid you farewell : and here,” she continued, taking a letter from her bosom, “I was so fortunate as to go to the post-house this morning, time enough to prevent its falling into the hands of Bernardo ; and that it may give you consolation, Signiora, is my earnest wish.”

VIOLA

VIOLETA was overjoyed, for she concluded this was an answer from the Abbess, and therefore intreated Bianca would wait till she had read it.

“THAT I will, Signiora !” replied the housekeeper, “and right glad shall I be to take back another to serve you.”

VIOLETA now tore open the envelope, and hastily cast her eyes over the contents. It was from a sister of the convent, acquainting her, ‘that the Abbess, who was extremely ill at the time her letter reached them, had died a very few days after ; that the confusion they had been thrown into on this account, was the reason she had not written before : and concluded with telling her, they should have been glad to have rendered her any service in
their

their power, but till the election of a new superior, could not promise to take her into their house.' Here was at once a period to all her long cherished hopes of quitting the castle; and she was now left without any resource, but that of patiently yielding to her fate. A distant step, by warning the housekeeper to depart, roused her from the stupor of fruitless meditation. Affectionately she pressed the hand of Bianca, and while tears started to her eyes, said, she had not now one friend in the world to whom she could apply for assistance. The good woman, who feared a further delay, fervently implored a blessing on her head, then as fast as possible hastened down the stairs, and followed by the prayers and good-wishes of her fellow-servants, finally quitted an abode, where she had served through life with honesty and fidelity.

fidelity. "And thus they are rewarded in this world," sighed the old woman, as she raised her eyes to take one last look of the turrets of the castle; "and a sorry one it is, where folks are absolutely despised, and ill-treated, because they won't take part with evil doers, and be false to the memory of their true Lord! God rest the soul of the good Bertoldo, say I, Marco!" she added, "and bless the Signior, who is as like what he was, as two peas." Marco, who had always felt great veneration for the house-keeper, joined in the prayer, telling her, he was sure she would be recalled whenever the Signior became Lord of the Castle.

BIANCA shook her head, warmly pressed his hand, and then bidding him be a good lad, took the road towards
the

the cottage of a friend, where she was to sleep that night, and then proceed to Naples on the morrow.

EARLY the next day, a courier arrived from the Conte di Montebino, acquainting the Marchese, that himself and daughter would be with him on the following evening; and expressing their mutual satisfaction in the prospect of an approaching meeting. This intelligence was rather premature for the half-formed plans of Morano, who depended on a delay of the visit, to have in some way disposed of Viola, whom he was most desirous now to guard from the sight and knowledge of Olivia. Zanotti, his counsellor and friend, had of late been peculiarly morose and reserved; and among the many inquietudes that preyed upon his guilty mind, this thought had
much

much contributed to alarm and perplex him: that a restrained dislike subsisted between them, a very inaccurate observer might have seen: and Morano, who, as he advanced in life, began to feel the weight of conscience press heavy, acknowledged but too forcibly the extent of his power. Still, however, it was of the utmost importance to keep him in his interest; and, in order to do so, he increased in the warmth of his attentions, and loaded him with courtesy and respect. He had however to contend with a man, whose single glance could develope the finest tissue of art, and over-reach his enemies, when most they fancied themselves successful and secure. During the course of the day, the Marchese had another interview with Albenza, and apprized him of the coming of the expected guests: but this intelligence,
painful

painful as it proved, had not power to shake that faith and affection, irrevocably devoted to Viola, whom he still persisted to demand of his father, declaring he never would be the husband of Olivia; and refusing to offer his hand where he could not bestow his heart. Morano finding that threats and denunciations were of no avail, had at last recourse to stratagem; and falling at the feet of his son, besought him, as he would not plunge his father into ruin and despair, to preserve appearances towards Olivia, acknowledging, with well-dissembled accents of sorrow and contrition, that he had contracted debts with the Conte, (which he was at this time unable to discharge,) and on this marriage alone rested his hopes to cancel them; that his honour, his character, his peace, depended on its taking place; and that if Albenza per-

sisted

sisted in his obstinate predilection for Viola, he would be answerable for the life of a parent, who now humbly besought as a favour, an obedience which, by right, he was justified in enforcing. Albenza was horror-struck ! he regarded the still prostrate Marchese in a manner that sufficiently indicated the tumult which passed within him : at length he said, while he raised him from his degrading attitude,

“ RISE, my Lord ! I conjure you rise, and in allowing me time to recal the strength of mind I own your confession has somewhat put to flight, believe that I understand the extent of my duties, and know how to practise them ;” his voice trembled, he faltered, and traversed the room under agitation no efforts could conceal ; alternately from red to pale were the transitions

transitions of his countenance ; every nerve seemed throbbing with emotion ; every poignant feeling combating with itself ; while the Marchese, who hoped every thing from the noble generosity of his nature, could scarcely conceal his joy and satisfaction.

“ MY Lord ! ” said Albenza, in a voice of solemnity, and endeavouring to assume calmness and composure, “ your words have each struck daggers to my soul ! nevertheless, they have effected that which I never could have believed myself equal to. I renounce Viola for ever ! with her, my every source of joy and happiness ; with her, the whole for which I prized existence ; for whom I would at any time have forfeited my life. At the shrine of *your* vices, my Lord, behold your son immolate his youth’s best hopes,

hopes, and welcome misery, as an expiation of *your* offences; but let this marriage be concluded speedily.—Let me not reflect on what I've done, for that is madness!—Come now, Olivia, with all thy sex's arts, thy wily blandishments, and I will vow to love—to cherish——Oh no, no! surely that never can be—the loathed sounds would die upon my tongue!—My Viola! my bosom's love, farewell!—Father—Morano—I am your victim! In that last sigh, I tore her from my heart, and give myself to thee, and to destruction!”

THE Marchese threw his arms about his neck, and with affected tears of tenderness and gratitude, thanked and blessed him; but Albenza tore from his embrace, and rushed wildly from the apartment, while Morano, having

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gained his point, (for though he witnessed the conflict of his son, he knew him incapable of swerving from his word,) repaired exulting to the monastery.

To remove Viola from her present accessible situation, was now, however, a material object ; and for this purpose he thought of some chambers which had long been uninhabited, in a distant part of the castle. During the life of the old Conte Morano, it had never undergone repairs or alteration, so proud was he of its Gothic and antique appearance ; but when the present owner came into possession, he had it completely modernized, excepting this part of the northern turret, which, from its bad aspect, unpleasant view, and awkward proportions, was thought not deserving the expense. As is generally the case,

case, in countries where the established religion is bigotted and severe, all the lower classes of society, as well as some of more enlightened understandings, were much inclined to superstition; and the circumstance of rooms being long untenanted, was quite sufficient to render them subjects of apprehension and terror: innumerable were the histories, therefore, that had been circulated, relative to this part of the building; and for years past, the domestics would as soon have entered the infernal regions, as ventured near this proscribed spot; it was, however, admirably suited to the purposes of the Marchese in confining Viola, as it was far removed from the habitable parts of the castle, and where none of the servants would ever dare approach. He was not long in resolving to whom he should entrust this important charge,

as it was his intention to appoint the wife of Bernardo Bianca's successor, and he knew enough of these people to be convinced he might safely trust them in his iniquitous designs. A consultation with Zanotti, therefore, soon concluded one of the deepest-laid plots that had ever been contrived against the peace of two amiable young persons, whose only error had been disinterested attachment, and whose ingenuousness of character made them an easy prey to the artifices of cruelty and deception. It was planned, that in the dead of night Viola should be borne from her chamber by Bernardo, to the dreary apartments; that every care should be taken to favour the idea of her having escaped from the castle, the news carried to Albenza in the morning; and in this place was she to be strictly guarded till his marriage,

and

and departure with his bride, when she would be immediately forced into some far distant Convent, and there obliged to take that veil, which would for ever place an eternal barrier between her and the object of her innocent, but unhappy love. During this conference, Albenza had given himself up to every sensation of bitterness and despair; in the distraction of the moment, he sought the presence of Viola, determined to pour forth his complaints, and abide by that decision he had at all times found so equitable and so just; how then was he stunned by the information—that she was imprisoned by the orders of his father, and forbidden intercourse with every one! that she was torn from him for ever; that he had promised to become the husband of another, and forego all those bright visions of delight and hap-

piness he had once hoped to have realized, rushed like frenzy on his brain, and nearly bereft him of reason : but yet his Father ! the man to whom he owed existence—the husband of his adored mother—could he plunge him into misfortunes, or devote to disgrace the parent imploring at his feet ? could he trample on those filial ties which bind the very brute to its species ? Ah, no ! Every principle of nature and religion revolted at the idea, and left him, though miserable, determined. Of what avail, then, would it be to see Viola ? an interview with her now, would but render a separation, certain and inevitable, doubly dreadful. How the Marchese had become the creditor of Montebino, was a point that much surprised him ; nor in reality was it for debts of honour alone (extensive as they were,) for which Morano had thus engaged

engaged himself; dreading Albenza's investigation of that property which so shortly would be his due, and which his own extravagance had so much wasted, he had stipulated with Montebino, to advance a sum of money on the day of his son's marriage with Olivia, an agreement readily acceded to by the Conte, to whom riches were no object, in comparison with uniting his daughter to the heir of one of the most illustrious and powerful families in the kingdom.

IN the contemplation of a mild summer's evening, Viola had stood long at her lattice; the sun still glowed faintly on the landscape, and the distant murmur of the waterfall down the rocks, added its soothing sound to the placid solemnity of the hour; yet a sad undefinable pre-sentiment weighed

on her mind, and she beheld with all the bitterness of disappointment each vivid promise of delusive fancy fade before the sombre shades of truth and certainty : sad retrospection for the youthful breast ; she saw herself unknown to society, unclaimed by one friend, unfortunate in her attachment ; deserted, persecuted, and, above all, deprived of that liberty, which, under the sternest pressure of calamity, still shining a celestial ray from Heaven, illumines the darkest way. At the time of the Marchesa's death she had considered this most invaluable of all blessings but of little worth ; only in deprivation do we appreciate the highest gifts of fortune ; and she who had hitherto gazed on the " world before her " as a blank surface, now recoiled with agony from the idea of imprisonment ; and as her eye followed the birds, skimming

ming their rapid flight towards the wood, her heart bounded at the sight, and panted to be free.

“ALAS!” she cried, “how do I envy yonder peaceful brute that grazes in the pasture! The nightingale that nestles by my window can fly to meet his love, and all are happy; save man alone, the victim of prejudice and narrow pride, at once a despot and a slave, he alone is miserable, alone is vicious!” She had scarce finished her pensive soliloquy, before her eye caught a glimpse of one descending the precipice to the right; it was not sufficiently near for her to ascertain the person, though he seemed familiar to her recollection; presently he wound round the step near that part of the rock where she had indulged her meditations the night of her visit to Gradisca; a clearer view,

as he stopped and raised his head, proved it to be Albenza; and with feelings of the most poignant nature did she gaze upon him, and give vent to that tenderness his unexpected appearance had so forcibly recalled. He had thrown himself on the rock, and in an attitude of the deepest melancholy, seemed lost in painful rumination. What would Viola not have given at this moment, to have shared his sufferings, and participated in his sorrows! to have poured forth the effusions of her heart in his bosom, and by kindness and sympathy, to heal those wounds she was but too certain rankled in his! In a transport of grief she called loudly on his name, but the echo alone reverberated to the sound. In the hopelessness of despair, she stretched forth her hands to the spot; but he to whom they were directed,

uncon-

unconscious, saw them not. With eyes dimmed by weeping, she continued immoveable at the lattice, till darkness began to steal over the world, and seemed to the desponding and presageful soul of Viola, to cast an eternal gloom over *him*—she could not help fancying she now beheld for the last time: terrible were the forebodings that crowded to her mind, and every deepening cloud that darkened the horizon, appeared as the harbinger of misfortune. Albenza was now no longer visible; and after offering up a fervent prayer for his safety, she left the window, and sat down to wait with some impatience the coming of Laurentine, who soon arrived, to the great joy of Viola; for after a whole day spent in total solitude, she really looked forward to a short interview with this good, though uninformed girl, as to

a source of comfort and consolation. She was surprised, however, at the unusual dejection of her air, the cause of which did not long remain a secret ; for the waiting-maid, after delivering her opinion as usual on the conduct of the Marchese, informed her, that the person just arrived, as successor to Bianca, was no other than the wife of the steward, and as savage and frightful as himself. Viola felt grieved at this intelligence ; for, humble as she was, she had cherished the idea of the good old housekeeper as some dependance in the moment of peril. Laurentine was now the only being in the castle in the least attached to her interest, and she dreaded lest the politic tyranny of the Marchese would soon deprive her of this last support. With the most eager attention she listened to every thing Laurentine recounted, who, after
telling

telling her the Conte and his daughter were shortly expected, informed her, that the Marchese and Zanotti had been closetted almost the whole day; that the Signior seemed unusually depressed; "and as for Bernardo, Signiora, I don't know what's become of him: like the rest of the men, I suppose, he likes any house better than that which contains his wife; I've seen him but once to-day, and then it was in an odd out-of-the-way place; he had been laying the ghosts, I fancy, that our fine visitors may not be disturbed of nights." Viola faintly inquired what she meant.

"WHY, have you never heard, Signiora, of the northern turret," replied Laurentine, "that's been shut up for so many years, because, as they say, a Signiora of the Morano family died there of a broken heart: her lover,
Signiora,

Signiora, was killed by her elder brother, who did not approve their marriage: for my part, I do not believe in all this nonsense, though I must allow there is something awful in the very look of that place."

VIOLETTA recollected often to have noticed the picturesque effect its rugged and broken towers had by moon-light on the scene, and now involuntarily sighed to the memory of the unfortunate inhabitant they once contained; nor could she forbear (such is the proneness of human nature to recur to its own individual interest) from drawing a similitude between her own fate and that of this pining victim to love and inflexibility. She was now led into a train of ideas that kept her silent; and Laurentine, after arranging the apartment, and trimming the lamp, placed

placed some cold viands on the table, and besought her to partake of them ; but Viola had no appetite, and feeling somewhat inclined to that repose which seldom courted her acceptance, requested her to remove the things, and leave her to her slumbers. The servant obeyed, and left once more alone, she felt, as her ear dwelt on her receding footsteps, that her prospect of rest had very much decreased, in proportion as solitude brought back its fearful influence on her spirits, and she was ashamed to acknowledge, even to herself, the extent of those terrors that now harassed her imagination. Albenza was constantly before her eyes, and the awful voice unceasingly vibrated on her fancy : unable to sleep, she took down some poems from the shelf, and began to read ; but a short trial soon convinced her that the heart burthened

thened with sorrows of its own, is only driven to more acute sensation by dwelling on those of description: we ponder, compare, and refine, till every evil is augmented; far from pouring balm into the wound, it tears it open in the most tender part; while the mind, with redoubled sensibility, is thrown back upon itself, sinking under the pressure of those feelings to which the seductive language of sentiment has but communicated a deeper smart.

THE night was clear and beautiful; every star, as it twinkled in the firmament, seemed, by its brightness, an inlet to that Heaven of which it formed a beam. Viola seated herself at the open lattice, for the day had been uncommonly sultry, and the air refreshed and invigorated her; still she was uneasy, for every leaf that trembled in
the

the breeze, every sound that rose upon the gale, she fancied to be the noise of footsteps, and shivered lest the late horrible conferences should be again renewed. A faint gleam of distant light now startled her, for she did not know any part of the building from whence in that direction it could proceed ; soon it disappeared, and all was darkness ; then it became visible again ; and Viola for the first time recollected that it must issue from the northern turret, whose gloomy dark battlements were now conspicuous from the stream of light reflected on its summit. Spite of the reason which taught her to condemn belief in supernatural agency, she could not view the blue and lambent flame that fixed exactly opposite, and remember all that had lately occurred, without a sentiment very nearly allied to superstition. With a kind of
stifled

stifled emotion she watched its continuance nearly one quarter of an hour, when it died gradually away. The story told by Laurentine had made a powerful impression on her, and she remained with her looks rivetted on the turret some time longer, till hearing the family retire to rest, she determined if possible to avoid the melancholy task of watching through another long night; and throwing herself in her clothes on the bed, endeavoured to sleep: long it was before she acknowledged its soothing power; and when she did, dark shadowy forms, and phantoms of unconnected horror, flitted past her: twice she started, and fancied a man stood with an uplifted stiletto by her side; cold drops of perspiration sat on her face; her hands were hot and burning; she looked around the chamber, but all was safe,
all

all was profound tranquillity: once more she laid her head upon the pillow, and began to doze; alas! only to be transported to the chambers of the Marchesa, and trembling in every joint she awoke with the awful mandate of the mysterious invisible sounding like thunder on her ear: "Surely some one spoke!" exclaimed the terrified Viola, her eyes wildly exploring the chamber: A low hollow noise beat heavy against the casement: "It is the owl," she cried, pressing her hand on her beating heart; "sad messenger of misfortune, of late thou hast been *my* only visitor!" Again she cast another fearful glance towards the door; the lamp placed in the chimney emitted but a feeble ray, and served only to render the gloom of midnight more appalling; with her hands uplifted, she besought Providence to remove the oppressive load
from

from her mind ; and having finished her prayer, was just making another effort for composure and oblivion, when, with feelings that bereft her of every faculty, she perceived a figure stealing through the obscurity of the apartment, and approach her bed : horror-struck, she sprang from it ! but what were her emotions, when by the help of a dark lanthorn which he held in his hand, she recognised the ferocious features of Bernardo ! His countenance was more ghastly than ever ; crime seemed to be written on every deepened line, while the gnawings of repressed conscience gave a livid cast to his dark and swarthy complexion.

“ You must follow me ! ” he cried, in a surly tone, putting forth his hand, to seize that which seemed to curdle at
his

his touch ; “ without a word, you must follow me ! ”

VIOLA, scarcely knowing whether at first to credit the evidence of her senses, gazed upon him without uttering a syllable, or attempting to move from the spot : and in this state of torpidity, it is probable would long have remained, had not the voice of her companion roused her to the consciousness of her situation.

“ HAVE pity on me ! ” she exclaimed, catching hold of his garment, “ have pity on me ! and if ever one particle of humanity inhabited your breast, spare an innocent, an injured woman. Oh, take not my life thus wrongfully ! In mercy to yourself have compassion upon me, and save me for the sake of
Him

Him on whom you will one day call to save you !”

“ YOUNG woman,” replied the villain, ironically, “ my business here is not to listen to exhortations and whining sermons ; I came hither to execute the commands of my employer, and trust me, shall not flinch in my duty ; have done with your prayers, therefore, for they will be of no use : go with me you must, and it is as well to do it quietly, as make a piece of work, when there are none near to help you.”

VIOLA now threw herself on her knees before him, conjuring him to say whither he meant to take her ; but the only answer she received, was a harsh order to be quiet, and obey.

Finding therefore that her intreaties were of no avail, she resolved, since she must submit, to do it with dignity and firmness ; and covering herself with her veil, motioned Bernardo to lead on ; every step she took, recommending herself to God, as she had no doubt but that he was conveying her to some secret dungeon, there to perpetrate her murder. In silence they reached the great hall, at the further extremity of which was a long narrow passage, terminating in a steep winding staircase : at the top of it they halted, and Bernardo drew forth a large bunch of rusty keys from under his cloak. The terrors of Viola here got the better of her prudence, for grasping his arm, she besought him not to kill her.

“ Is blood then so strongly written on my visage ? ” fixing his eye with a diabolical

diabolical expression on her countenance. As he spoke, the beat of one sounded heavily on the blast; and without any further observation, as if struck by some sudden impulse, he hurried her forwards to the end of another dreary passage, equally long with the last, though of more ancient and uncouth appearance: the ceiling was of fretted arch-work, the wainscoting discoloured, and in many places peeling off: Viola now perceived a small grated door, whose hinges were rusted with decay, and when with much difficulty it yielded to the efforts of Bernardo, a noxious vapour that instantly issued from the opening, proved it had been long since human footstep had passed the threshold: after winding down a steep spiral stair-case, the balustrades of which almost crumbled at the touch, they entered a large
spacious

spacious gallery, whose high circular windows seemed unable at any time to admit the light; and now added to the torn and dirty tapestry that mouldered on its walls, gave it at once an air of gloom and desolation: furniture, once magnificent, lay scattered in ruined heaps upon the floor, while some half obliterated portraits hung pendant from the walls, exhibiting images of disgust and horror. Her conductor now led her through a room equally dismal with that she had just quitted, into another of smaller dimensions; there stood a bed, a table, and stand for a lamp, which comprised the whole conveniences of an apartment, destined by the Marchese as the abode of the unhappy Viola. "We need go no farther," said Bernardo, putting the light on the table; "this place is, I think, sufficiently secure; and you are now,"

he continued, while Viola regarded him with mute attention, “ in the chambers of the northern turret, far beyond the reach of the Signior, who has, I must inform you, consented to receive the Lady Olivia as his wife !”

“ STAY !” interrupted Viola, while her whole soul glowed with an indignant sense of injury, that entirely dissipated every sentiment of apprehension, and let me ask by what right I am thus unjustly confined, when even the paltry plea of tearing me from him, exists no longer? Since the Signior has consented to his father’s wishes, why am I thus persecuted and detained ?”

“ THINK you,” said Bernardo, “ that the Marchese has not more faith in locks and bolts, than in the farrago of
a woman’s

a woman's promise? or that he has yet sufficient confidence in his son, to trust him in the sight of those artful allurements, which first led him astray, and may a second time entice him from his duty. No, no, the Marchese has not plotted and contrived, to be duped so easily." He now made towards the door, then stopt, and added, "Let me warn you, Signiora, that you will find your only friend in submission: my wife will attend you in the morning, and bring any thing you may need from your own apartments; but beware of attempting to escape; it is fruitless, and the consequence will be fatal to yourself."

"AND am I then to be buried here for ever!" cried Viola, "cut off with the burthen of existence from all hope, all prospect, all redress? I entreat you

tell the Marchese it is my wish to leave the castle ; to leave my country ; that I will hide me in a desert, so he will compassionate my hapless youth, and not condemn me to this living death."

"I CAN listen to no more prating," returned the man, totally unmoved by her appeal, "so fare you well, Signiora." He then closed the door, with a violence that jarred the whole foundation ; and she soon after heard the grating of the various locks. While looking round her prison, she felt as if enclosed within her tomb : so rapid had been the change in her situation, that for some time she could scarcely avoid a belief that she was still dreaming ; conviction, however, soon succeeded, and finding that complaint was useless, that her fate was inevitable, and herself far beyond the possibility
of

of gaining assistance, she resolved, as far as lay in her power, to suffer with patience and resignation. In the idea that her misfortunes were not excited by her own misconduct, she experienced a tranquil kind of pleasure, which is ever the companion of an upright heart; she knew that her thoughts, her desires, her actions, were all open to that Being, without whose concurrence the sparrow cannot fall to the ground: and she felt assured, that innocence never suffered persecution in this life, but for good and wise purposes. It was not from the tenets of philosophy, or the frigid apathy of natural indifference, that Viola acquired serenity in this hard hour of adversity; no, it was a flower planted by the hand of religion and virtue, culled from the rational qualities of her own disposition, and nurtured

in the strength of innate worth and conscious rectitude. Hope, too, gently whispered o'er her mind, and despair was banished to the guilty bosom, where alone it finds a lasting and a kindred home. Holding the lamp above her head, she took a more accurate survey of her apartment, which she imagined to be on the other side of the tower from that in which she had beheld the light. The casements, like those of the gallery, were much elevated ; and, she feared, from the thick appearance of the glass, would afford her still less light ; the curtains of the bed had once been crimson velvet, but changed almost to a black, and literally adhering together in various places by lumps of clotted dust ; the floor was also much worn away, and even those places which the hand of time had spared, were eaten by the rats
and

and vermin that infested every part. To sleep was impossible, and she therefore continued to examine the room, and look anxiously for the return of day: this soon appeared, the grey of morn became visible through the high windows, and with its light invigorated the sinking spirits of Viola, who, solicitous to ascertain her present situation, moved the shattered table under the casement, and then placing on it a chair, obtained a perfect view of the prospect. It was exactly where she conjectured, the northern aspect of the turret commanding an immense extent of country over the plains of Abruzzo, and looking immediately into a large paved court-yard; but which, from the high grass and weeds that choked it up, exhibited only a pathless greensward; at its extremity stood the ruins of an old chapel, with the cemetery belonging, both, like the

ashes they covered, crumbling into dust. Here and there appeared the remnants of a broken monument, while some maimed and headless figures, that had once been supporters to the gallery, and exquisite productions of sculpture, seemed starting in distorted attitudes toward the sepulchres, of which their livid colouring made them look inhabitants. Till she had entirely concluded her search, the hope of being able to effect her deliverance had been fondly indulged; but now, wearied and disappointed, she descended from the window, and feeling assured by the cheerful ray, that partially enlightened her dreary residence, threw herself on the bed, and soon obtained remission of her cares in a quiet and peaceful slumber. From this she did not awake, till the voice of some one at the gallery door made her hastily rise, when
she

she discovered, by the brilliancy of the sun, that she must have slept nearly till noon. The person who now entered was Bernardo, with provisions, saying, that his wife was prevented coming by her duties in the castle, but that at night she would bring her clothes from her own apartment: “And that you may rest assured, all attempts to counteract the will of the Marchese are impossible,” added the steward, “know, that it is reported and believed throughout the castle, that you have escaped from it by night by means of your friend Gracisca.”

“AND *she* will suffer then on a charge, of which, Heaven knows, she is most innocent!” replied Viola, passionately clasping her hands.

“NEVER you mind that,” answered

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Bernardo ;

Bernardo; “but since you are so mighty conscientious, Signiora, why did not you reflect a little before you set about inveigling the affections of the Signior?”

VIOLETA, who felt she would degrade herself by replying to the insults of this unmannered ruffian, mildly enquired, if she might be permitted to walk in the gallery through the day-time?

“THAT’S as *you* behave, and *my* wife thinks proper,” replied Bernardo: “for my part I think there’s room enough for you to walk here; and as for peeping and prying, why surely you’ve had enough of that already.”

SHE now ventured to ask, whether the room, visible from the inhabited part of the castle, was that in which tradition

tradition reported the Signiora had died?

“ IT is ;” and moreover, he added, “ the more you keep out of it the better ; for it is said, every night, as the turret clock tolls twelve, she traverses the spot where her lover was murdered, uttering dismal shrieks, and then vanishes in a flame of fire !”

“ AND wherefore need *I* fear ?” replied Viola calmly ; “ that those who ache beneath the burthen of secret sin should tremble at these tales, I cannot wonder ; but innocence, Bernardo, is it’s own safeguard in the midst of every danger.”

HE made no reply, but telling her his wife would be there at night, left the room, again barring and fast lock-

ing the doors as he passed through. Once more alone, Viola had again scope for meditation: What would Albenza think, was the first presentation of her thoughts, and one that so entirely overcame her, as to leave no resource but to dismiss it as soon as possible. That the unhappy Gradisca, already sufficiently bowed down by adversity, should thus at last fall into the net spread by her enemies, was an idea replete with anguish; for she plainly saw through the schemes of the Marchese, whose purpose it was not only to secure one victim, but completely to ensnare the other. In sorrowful ruminations on her own destiny, and tender anxiety for the fate of him she loved, did Viola pass her long and solitary day, without a book, or one single solace to beguile the heavy monotony of inactive existence; yet as
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the hour approached when she might expect the coming of Beatrice, apprehension chilled her bosom; for the account of Laurentine had given her a most unfavourable prospect in her new gaoler, and she had early learnt to think hardness and depravity in a female form, infinitely more disgusting and fatal, than in any other shape whatever. Her conjectures, however, on this subject were soon dispersed by the entrance of the woman, and her own observations soon convinced her that Laurentine had drawn her description but too faithfully. She was tall, awkward, and masculine; a face of uncommon ugliness was assisted by an expression of cunning and harshness; and as Viola withdrew her eyes from this short survey of her companion, she felt assured no one soft sentiment could exist in so ruthless a dwelling.

dwelling. She was laden with a large bundle of wearing apparel belonging to Viola; her purse, containing her whole little stock of money; and an hour-glass, which she placed upon the table; and then observing in a laconic manner, that the provisions would hold out till the next evening, when she should return again, quitted the room without the smallest salutation, leaving to solitude and sadness the dejected Viola, though still determining to look forward with hope, and to acquire fortitude and resignation. The effort, as is generally the case, was in a degree followed by success; and, miserable as she was, she carefully avoided giving way to those violent paroxysms of grief, which only injure the constitution, and enervate the mind. Her sorrow was settled, but serene; that gloomy window, at
first

first so despised, now became a consolation and source of comfort; while a pencil, found by accident among her clothes, was regarded with exquisite satisfaction; and the pleasure she experienced in delineating the distant landscape on the rough walls of her prison, effectually evinced that a mind, naturally active and vigorous, will, though apparently deprived of every means of enjoyment, find solid resources within itself.

CHAP. V.

“ Every thing becomes intolerable to the man who is once subdued by grief.”

BOLINGBROKE'S *Reflections upon Exile.*

WITHOUT dwelling further on the painful feelings of Albenza, the hopes, doubts, and guilty fears of the Marchese, or the more dark and inscrutable plans of Zanotti, we will hasten to that period, when a numerous and splendid retinue announced the near approach of Montebino and his daughter to the castle. At that moment the Marchese and Zanotti were engaged over a game at chess, while Albenza, wholly occupied with the idea of Viola's flight, was leaning with folded arms against the

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window,

window, lost in thought and perplexity. The message seemed as an electric shock to the whole party; Zanotti, without speaking, covered his face, and abruptly quitted the room, an example instantly followed by Morano, as Albenza threw himself on a seat, in a state of agony to which words can but ill do justice. Ah ! how often was he not now tempted to have seized this favourable opportunity, to fly for ever from his native home, and pursue his lost, loved Viola through a world, on which, in anguish, he beheld her cast, an helpless unprotected wanderer ! How often was he not tempted to have abjured his promise, and live alone for her, without whom existence would be a curse ! Yet ever in the midst of these distempered ravings, the kneeling form of a parent still rose cruelly superior to every other ; and honour, again triumphing over affection,

fection, condemned him to despair and sorrow. Scarcely had he recovered composure ere Olivia entered, supported on one side by her father, and on the other by the Marchese. The wan countenance of Albenza became still paler as he raised the offered hand to his lips, and turned aside to conceal the agitation no effort could repress. Olivia looked, if possible, more beautiful than ever; in high spirits, animated and lively, every grace of conversation was exerted, every talent of wit and playfulness called forth, to engage admiration and attention: yet, while her vanity was piqued by the marked indifference of Albenza, the barrenness of her mind disregarded that sweet interchange of sentiment, "where heart meets heart reciprocally soft;" and in becoming the Marchesa di Albenza, her cherished hopes of grandeur and ambition would be fully gratified

gratified. It was soon settled between the parents, that the nuptials should be celebrated with all possible expedition; the Marchese, from the dread of Viola's discovery; Montebino, that its conclusion would enable him to return to that career of dissipation in the city, for which, through life, he had sacrificed every other consideration; while Albenza witnessed the magnificent preparations made for his nuptials in a state of sullen apathy, from which he never departed; for it seemed, indeed, that the short space of one month had effected a total change on a character, once diffusing pleasure on all around him: in solitude he was listless and absent; in society, petulant, reserved, and severe: with Viola each active property of his soul had centered; she was gone, and they were fled for ever. Every hour he could steal from the
hated

hated presence of Olivia was spent in useless search; his trusty servant Marco had been dispatched in pursuit of her; the fields, the roads, the valley, was explored in vain; and the cottages, once cheered by her kindness, and warmed by her bounty, now resounded to the name of Viola, or only echoed to the complaints of her distracted lover.

THE Conte and Olivia had just been five weeks at the castle, when Morano pressed his son to name the day for his nuptials, congratulating him at the same time on the prospect of happiness it held forth, and expatiating largely on the beauty and accomplishments of his destined bride. “Enough, my Lord,” replied Albenza; “this is a subject I have now no inclination to discuss; it is sufficient that I have sacrificed

ficed my feelings to cancel *your* obligation, and to preserve from ignominy a name transmitted to your keeping without a blot: but I am not to be deceived: of the virtues of the Signiora I am already but too well aware; it will soon be my duty to appreciate them."

THE Marchese, though he both looked and felt abashed, was not easily repulsed, and again urging the necessity of a speedy solemnization, concluded his request by an artful acknowledgment of gratitude, for possessing a son, whose virtuous self-denial had so deservedly rendered him the object of the warmest eulogium. During this harangue Albenza had sat regardless, and absorbed in his own reflections, till at length, roused by the reiterated demands of his father, he calmly replied, it was to him perfectly indifferent,

ferent, and might take place on whichever day he chose to name. Morano was satisfied; and retired, delighted at his success, to communicate the result to Olivia and her father, with whom, after a short consultation, it was finally agreed that the marriage should be solemnized on that day week. The Marchese now once more saw himself, in idea, at the pinnacle of his wishes in this marriage; his pecuniary difficulties would be removed, and himself able to prosecute his profligate habits and pursuits without fear or observation; Viola would cease to be an incumbrance and a dread, his son no longer a check upon his actions, and ——— hold, Morano!—Lives there not still a being more to be feared, more to be dreaded, than both these? Exists there not an obstacle interwoven with thy fate, more difficult to remove, more

inimical to repose? Zanotti was a barrier death only could destroy; a sting festering in his conscience, and gnawing at his heart. Since the arrival of the visitors this extraordinary man had much absented himself from the castle in the day-time; at dark, indeed, he sometimes sought the Marchese, but his stay was short, his entrance and departure, managed by means of a private door, to which he held the key, and which admitting him but in the dead of night, failed not, together with the sudden and mysterious disappearance of Viola, to excite suspicion among the servants, who, knowing her to be unfriended and inexperienced, generally discredited the tale circulated of her escape, and only added it to that catalogue of conjectures and surmises, founded on the inconsistent and equivocal conduct of their Lord; and which

which were daily gaining ground throughout the household. Of Zanotti, also, there were no reports too romantic not to be believed, no histories too improbable not to be related; his habits, his customs, and his character, became the subject of constant discussion; the several lay brothers were interrogated as to his minutest actions; and while the more rational inhabitants of the monastery were satisfied in the opinion that he carried a secret of magnitude in his breast; that his inward faith agreed not with the precepts he professed; and that he had assumed the hood of devotion either for the concealment of deeds long past, or for the better completion of purposes yet to come. The weak and superstitious domestics universally declared he could be no other than the infernal genius of the Marchese, who, after deluding him
to

to the commission of crimes on earth, would in the end precipitate him into lasting destruction. Often, in the lone and silent midnight hour, were his heavy footsteps heard to pace the apartments of Morano in gloomy vibration; often their high raised voices, breaking in angry dispute the mournful pauses of the wind, struck terror to the fearful listener; or words of obscure, yet mighty import, send him back trembling to his couch, ungratified in curiosity, yet confirmed in suspicion.

At length the day arrived which was for ever to fix the destiny of Albenza. Vainly had he passed the night previous to it, in efforts to stem the torrent of affliction by ineffectual applications to reason, fortitude, and philosophy. Alas! he found reason had no cure, philosophy no remedy, for a generous

VOL. II. K mind,

mind, torn and lacerated in the tenderest part by the hand, which, of all others, ought to have poured balm into the wound. Sad, hopeless, bereft, the business of his life seemed at its close; and while he could only look forward 'to time, the physician of brutes, for a lingering and uncertain deliverance,' he viewed the tedious insipid vacuum, presented in the sequel, with impatience and disgust. His behaviour towards Olivia had ever been consistent with the sentiments of dislike he had avowed; cold, ceremonious, and reserved, he received her as a mercenary compromise at the hands of his father, and the native candour of his mind disdained professing that which he did not feel; while that Olivia should accept him on these terms, led him often to wonder at the indelicacy of any character, which
could

could barter each nicer principle of her sex to the sordid impulse of policy and ambition. Could he but have been assured of Viola's safety, he thought, in the certainty of her welfare, and the consciousness of his own integrity, he should yet experience a consolation, which might in a degree alleviate the severity of years doomed to regret, and devoted to disappointment: but she was fled he knew not whither; without support, had obeyed the commands of a rigid sense of justice; and perhaps, torturing idea! had sunk the victim of her own too generous determination. When he met Olivia at breakfast, she could not but observe the traces of dejection visible on his countenance: "You have not slept to-night, my Lord!" she exclaimed, with a sarcastic smile."

"HAPPINESS," hastily interrupted

the Marchese, who trembled at the storm gathering on her brow, “is surely as strong in its effects as grief; and even if that were not the case, who could be so insensible as to covet a repose which must be purchased at the expense of forgetting you.”

ALBENZA sighed.—“Your compliment is ill-timed, my Lord,” replied Olivia haughtily, “or your idea of pleasure wears a most rueful aspect: I should have rather thought the Signior wore the willow for a lost love, some pretty rustic, who has proved false-hearted.”

“WE do not speak of love,” replied Albenza, “ours is a marriage contract, Signiora; a contract from which that pure and gentle sentiment too often takes its flight.”

“MY

“ My children,” said the Marchese, who began much to fear the issue of this conversation, and taking a hand of each, “ Heaven knows with what care and solicitude I have studied for the welfare of each, in promoting this your union; let me, therefore, find reward in your mutual affection, and suffer not this auspicious day to be clouded by anger and discontent; here,” he continued, taking the hand of Olivia and placing it within his son’s, “ receive, in this Lady, the approved of *my* heart, the choice, I trust, of *yours*.” Albenza coldly raised it to his lips; and scarcely able to conceal the contempt which his father’s artful speech had excited, quitted the room, overcome with grief: from whence, after indulging an hour’s fruitless sorrow, he was summoned to lead his bride to the altar, while the dismal

countenance of Marco, as he announced this intelligence, gave him rather the appearance of an harbinger of death, than an ambassador from the Court of Hymen.

“ My master ! my dear master ! ” he exclaimed, as the distracted Albenza rushed through the hall ; and darting into the saloon, seized the hand of the wondering Olivia, and was hurrying her forward. The Marchese caught his arm, then said, in severe accents, “ You are disturbed, Albenza, and forget the respect due to me, to the Signiora and her father ; you forget ”——

“ I do indeed, my Lord,” he replied in a wild and disordered tone, “ but will henceforth be more observant.”—— He stopt, then added, turning to Olivia, “ I pray you pardon my abruptness ;
I have

I have not lately been myself, but will, for the future, strive to merit your indulgence." There was an expression of rooted agony in his look at this moment, a settled silent sorrow, that would have softened any heart less obdurate than that of the Marchese. Olivia seemed moved and irresolute; but a glance from her father soon chased away the feeling, and, presenting her hand to Albenza, she shewed, by a smile of complacency, her readiness to accept his apologies.

It was in a small private chapel of the castle, and in the presence of the Marchese and Montebino, that Zanotti pronounced the nuptial benediction; and, at the foot of the altar, Albenza registered that irrevocable vow, which for ever tied him to a woman he despised, and shut out hope, love, happi-

ness, and Viola, eternally. The Marchese, to testify his joy on the occasion, had prepared a costly entertainment ; innumerable were the guests invited, while every expensive invention of art and luxury was exhausted to deck the board and ornament the apartments ; and a concert, at which the most celebrated performers were to assist, with a splendid masked ball, were to conclude the amusements of the evening. The day now closing had been uncommonly beautiful, as Albenza, released from the side of Olivia, strolled into the woods to beguile an hour before he retired to dress, and give vent to his sorrows. After a ramble of considerable length, he stopped at the edge of a stream, and threw himself along the bank to enjoy a scene peculiarly in unison with his feelings. The setting sun glowed faintly

faintly on the waters, and its mellow tint falling on the ruins of a broken arch-way, erected there in former days by the Romans, to commemorate a battle gained on the spot, cast a striking sublimity over the whole. Albenza looked pensively around him, while the laboured pent-up sigh burst his bosom, and rose on the passing gale; then sunk into one of those mournful, though soothing contemplations, where sensibility reigns triumphant, and where every ruder passion is hushed and laid asleep : of Viola he thought ; imagination embodied the form, fancy drest it to his eye, and love cherished the deception on his heart, alas ! too soon to be dissolved ; and again his wreck of happiness, his fettered hand, his blasted prospects, started to his view, and each illusion vanished. “ And it is thus the warm and vivid hopes of youth fade in

the truths and certainties of life !” exclaimed Albenza, as his eye rested on the arch-way with solemn veneration. Sad, desponding were the reflections to which it gave birth ; and with all the gloom of disappointment, he mused on the vanity of existence, and the inefficacy of its pursuits ; on the very spot where he now reclined, how many souls had once beat high to the call of glory, thirsted for a name, bled for an empty honour ! while of all their toils, their feuds, and their ambition, this sinking ruin was now the sole memorial. Cheerless he turned away, as the bell chiming from the monastery warned him it was time to depart, and prepare for a scene ill according with the present state of his spirits. Taking a small path cut through the arch, as a nearer route to the castle, he was surprised by a low
rustling

rustling noise at some distance, and paused to listen, but hearing it no more, was proceeding slowly homeward as a deep sigh caught his ear, and convinced him what he heard had been reality : determined, therefore, to ascertain from whence it came, he turned hastily back to follow the sound : not long, however, to seek in suspense ; for a few paces shewed him the figure of a Monk, seated on a point of the building ; the cowl entirely covered a face which seemed raised upwards, in an attitude of contemplation ; his hands were clasped upon his breast ; and there was something at once so pensive, yet so peculiar in his appearance, that Albenza felt a thousand dark and undefinable images float before him, as he gazed. The motion of his feet now, for the first time, awakening the attention of the stranger, he lifted his head ;

while, what were the sensations of Albenza, when he disclosed the features of the Frenchman he had met at the Conte di Montebino's ! In an instant he drew it forward, and rising hastily from his seat, vanished by a narrow pass into the wood, leaving Albenza lost in speechless wonder, while a dread, secret and inexplicable, struck to his heart. Resolved, however, to pursue him, he darted through the opening with rapidity, nor stopt till he had explored every turn and thicket of the wood ; yet vain was his search, unanswered his calls and entreaties ; the Monk had fled ; and after two hours spent in fruitless efforts to discover him, he returned to the castle more than ever perplexed and dispirited. That this concealed foreigner had assumed the garb of a religious, for some sinister design, he could not doubt ; yet, that his intentions

tentions should be bad, the candour of his countenance denied; for the quick glance caught from his eye, beamed 'more in sorrow than in anger;' still, as Albenza reflected on this adventure, he could not check his anxiety to develope a mystery which seemed to hover over his house, a mystery, which, from the moment of his leaving the Conte's assembly, had filled his mind with corroding suggestions to the dishonour of his father, and one he was now resolved to lose no opportunity of unfathoming.

By this time most of the guests had assembled; Olivia looked and moved a Calypso; Montebino was a Spaniard; and the Marchese, in the costly vestments of a noble Moor, charmed all around by his easy grace and condescension; etruscan lamps, in curious devices,

devices, reflected their light from the trees ; while the numerous bands, placed in different walks of the gardens, combined with the beauty of the evening and the elegance of the company, gave to the whole an appearance of Fairy-land : joy, mirth, and hilarity reigned over all ; and that roof, which but a few weeks since had echoed to the melancholy note of death, and the murmur of sickness, now resounded with the shouts of laughter and conviviality ; even the servants seemed to partake in the happiness of their Lord ; and the usually reserved and unbending Zanotti, promised to preside at the bridal supper of his son.

“ THIS, my good fellow,” said Albenza, as Marco threw the sable domino over his shoulders, “ is the fittest garb *I* can wear ; for its gloomy colour
is

is but a poor type of what I endure—is the most appropriate to my purpose.”

THERE was something in the tone in which this was uttered, that caused Marco to lift his eyes from his employment, and fix them on his master; that master whom he now scarcely recognized for the gay blooming young man he had been wont formerly to tend with so much pride and pleasure, for grief had fixed its canker on the cheek once glowing with health and chearfulness; sorrow had spread its languor o’er a form once replete with grace, and breathing animation. Covered in his black domino, he mingled in the fantastic group, happy in a disguise which preserved him from interruption, and prevented his joining Olivia till the hour of supper. Absorbed in himself, he wandered round

the rooms an unnoticed member of the thoughtless circle; while his whole soul, wrapt in the remembrance of the Monk, still pursued him in idea, still dwelt in gloomy wonder on the magic of his appearance, and seeking him under all habits, fancied that the expression of his dark and melancholy eye pierced through the disguise of every mask who past him: wearied, however, of himself, and disgusted with the unmeaning and insipid gaiety of the scene before him, he left the saloon, and proceeded to the gardens, where the company was not so numerous; and soothed by the tranquillity of the evening, he struck into a close retired walk, continuing his way slowly towards the wood. Impelled almost by an irresistible impulse, he had nearly reached the boundary of the garden before he stopt to recollect whether his enterprise was not a rash one, for

should this same Monk prove but an instrument of treachery, what chance could he have, unarmed as he was, with one prepared for destruction? Not that Albenza feared to die ; on the contrary, he would have welcomed its awful summons as the messenger of peace, but he shrunk from the idea of assassination as the means ; and after some further consideration, was about to return, when a low, restrained footstep on the turf, convinced him some person was at hand. In the possibility that this might prove the object of his meditations, every prudent resolution was forgotten, and concealing himself behind the spreading foliage, he perceived a dusky form stealing along the path, with the air of one who fears detection. It was not long before he recognised the Monk ; and unmindful of the event, rushed from his hiding place,

place, and seizing him by the garment, demanded, in a firm and resolute tone, “ Who he was, and what were his motives for thus lurking in ambush on a spot where openly he seemed afraid to appear ?” To this forcible appeal the stranger made no reply, but calmly repelling the grasp, moved onward : still Albenza followed, threatening and challenging him to speak ; but his reiterated interrogations were only accompanied by a profound and awful silence on the part of the Monk ; and Albenza, though unaccustomed to fear, could not wholly dissipate a sensation no open outrage could have excited, but which, as is not unfrequently the case with the bravest minds, now yielded to the attacks of a superstition, favoured by the time and place, and coloured with the sombre presentiments of his own imagination.

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That it was in his power to extort confession, by opposing violence, seemed beyond a doubt ; yet though he burnt with the desire, a secret impulse restrained his hand, an involuntary feeling told him that the blow was forbidden. They had by this time almost reached the end of the walk, and the lights from the castle were beginning to diminish the obscurity, when Albenza once more caught the arm of the stranger, and conjured him to speak : “ We part not this night,” he cried, “ till you unfold the purport of your coming ; till you resolve my doubts, or feel my vengeance : art thou,” he added, “ the messenger of evil, and comest to sink my house yet lower in calamity than it is already fallen ? or dost thou hope (bent on some base design,) to strike such terrors in my guiltless bosom, as
blanched

blanched my father's cheek at thy appearance?"

"WHAT have *I* to do with *thee*?" replied the Monk in a hollow voice; "I seek a murderer!" As he spoke, he slowly lifted his garment; and, oh God! what were the feelings of Albenza, when he beheld not the stranger as he had seen him in the morning, but those same features, now livid, pale, and ghastly; a gaping wound was bared upon his bosom, while the crimson fount which issued from it, streamed o'er the sable of his inward garment, and seemed to cry for justice. Albenza stood aghast; cold perspiration bedewed his face, the words died upon his tongue, and he had scarcely time to motion it to stay, ere the figure glided through the hedge, and was seen no longer. Dark, dreadful

ful

ful were the thoughts that now took possession of his mind ; ruin, disgrace, infamy, stood in torturing array before him : himself married to a woman he abhorred, Viola wandering he knew not whither, and his father a murderer, rushed upon his fancy, already distorted with images of blood and horror ; reason seemed to totter on her seat as he called loudly on the Monk to return and relieve the agony under which he laboured, till, unable longer to endure the misery of suspense, and once more resolved to seek him, he darted towards the wood where the spectre appeared to have vanished.

IN the mean time the Marchese, displeased and surprised at the long absence of his son, became restless and uneasy : anxiously he hailed every black domino that passed, but no Albenza

benza appeared; and hurt and chagrined at the remarks of the company, and no longer able to find a plausible excuse for his behaviour, which he averred "must proceed from sudden indisposition," he left the side of Olivia to seek him; but vainly did he traverse the spacious halls and apartments, vainly did he inquire of every passer-by, if they had met the truant bride-groom in their way; till his uneasiness amounting to alarm, he repaired to the library, and angrily questioned Marco of his master; but the poor fellow could only tremble, and declare he had not seen him since his dressing hour, when he saw him enter the saloon, disguised in a black domino; and with this account, unsatisfactory as it proved, was the Marchese obliged to direct his course through the gardens in search of him.

It

It was already past midnight ; the rising damps had caused the parties to desert the lawn, the radiant beams of the moon were obscured behind a watery cloud, and the dying lamps that emitted their feeble rays from the trees, cast a melancholy shade over the whole, soft and soothing to the peaceful contemplative bosom, but replete with harrowing reflections to the guilt-struck sinner. These harrowing reflections now crowded to the soul of Morano, chained him motionless to the earth ; and fully proving he was unequal to the task of exploring the wood and thicket alone, he resolved to return, and dispatch his servants on a pursuit he now began to foresee would prove but of little avail ; for that love had triumphed over principle, and that Albenza had left the castle in search of Viola, he no longer doubted : dreading
to

to remain, yet unwilling to encounter the looks of Montebino and Olivia, he was framing some artful tale in his own thoughts, when the same low, though distinct step, that had been heard by Albenza, struck like lead upon his ear; involuntarily he started, turned pale, and was hastening from the place, when the Monk stood erect before him; not, however, as before, shrowded in his cowl, but uncovered and exposed to sight, the disturbed inhabitant of a darksome sepulchre. The Marchese shrunk back as his eye glared on the horrible phantom, and the blood curdled through his veins; he would have flown, but emotion chained him to the earth; he would have spoken, but guilt and consternation checked his utterance; the flame of madness seemed to whirl around his brain, and his clenched hands, convulsively spread before

before his face, were quivering with sensation, while every instant he expected that an avenging voice would sound in dreadful malediction; each moment, that a mighty retributive arm would dash him in atoms to the dust, but all was calm and silent; he ventured to raise his head, the vision had disappeared; again he glanced fearfully through the obscurity of the dark alley, but nothing was visible:—

“ Might it not be a vapour of the disturbed mind?” thought Morano, endeavouring to rally his courage—“ an effect of harrassed imagination?—Ah, could the mind embody that terror-striking form? Could imagination paint that faithful likeness?—The inward monitor of his bosom told him the hope was vain. On reaching the castle, he found the party was already assembled in the supper-room; it con-

sisted of Olivia, the Conte di Montebino, and the Father Zanotti; the rest of the company having departed on the alarm spread of Albenza's being missing.

“ I CAN gain no tidings of him !” exclaimed the Marchese, throwing himself into a chair, while his haggard look bore ample testimony to his assertion, “ but have now sent Marco towards the wood, where doubtless he will find him, as it has been long his favourite haunt.”

“ You are ‘disordered,’” said Zanotti, regarding him with a penetrative glance.”

“ I AM distressed,” replied Morano, looking still more livid, “ and am at a loss,” turning to Olivia, “ in
what

what manner to apologize for my son's conduct ; yet, if a long series of ill health can palliate habits made up of perverseness and inconsistency, I have that excuse to offer for him, though this beggars all the former vexations he has caused me, and"——

“ I FEAR I must be obliged to depart for the city, by day-break on the morrow,” interrupted Montebino, in a tone of agitation and peevishness ; “ some letters just arrived, acquaint me of affairs of importance, to which it is necessary I should attend ; and therefore this most unpleasant business, Marchese, must be in some way adjusted before we separate. I would not think you meant to trifle with me, or”——The entrance of the Conte's servant here interrupted the remainder of the speech ; for he approached his

master, and, whispering something in his ear, Montebino instantly left the room. Not long, however, was he absent; though, on returning, his countenance displayed evident marks of alarm and uneasiness; a circumstance which did not pass unnoticed, either by Zanotti or the Marchese, who, though galled by the late menace of Montebino, now endeavoured, as much as possible, to advance excuses, and mediate in a cause, which, after some further altercation, was amicably settled by the interference of the Abbate; when it was agreed, that in case Albenza continued absent, Olivia should still remain at the castle, and receive all the honour and respect due to the consort of its heir: this measure being acceded to, and amity restored, they sat down to a sumptuous repast, each in a state of internal
anarchy,

anarchy, that precluded every power of enjoyment. During the meal, Morano made every effort to appear cheerful and at ease, but his replies were disjointed, and his eye unceasingly turned towards the door, scarcely knowing whether most to hope the entrance of his son, or dread the appearance of another appalling figure. Zanotti, contrary to his usual custom, addressed himself often to Montebino, conversing on indifferent topics with interest and perspicuity; while the remarks he made, and the inferences he drew, proved at once the strength and information of a mind, whose native energies seemed assisted by all the advantages of refined society and profound study. In the course of the debate, an incident which had lately occurred in the city, was

casually mentioned ; and led to a discussion on the part of Montebino, as to the frequency of assassination.

THE Marchese addressed Olivia, called for wine, and evidently tried to change the subject ; while Zanotti argued with a force and boldness, that could only result from the innocence of an unsullied conscience, or the hardened guilt of a callous one.

“HOWEVER,” at length said Morano, “humanity obliges me to condemn the practice, yet I think there are cases, which require its toleration as a necessary evil,”—A look from the keen eye of Zanotti checked the ardour of his eloquence ; and affecting to smile, he ordered Bernardo to fill out more wine, as they would drink to the
return

return of happier hours. "This boy," he added, "makes a woman of me: that he should slight a treasure so inestimable! by Heavens it is a conduct I will never pardon!"

ZANOTTI endeavoured to excuse himself from drinking, alledging it was a luxury he never indulged in; but the Marchese insisted, and they all joined in the sentiment: scarcely concluded, ere Marco rushed into the room; his appearance wild and disordered, in his hand the mask and domino of his master, and hardly could he exclaim, "The stream in the wood!" when he fell at the feet of the Marchese, pale and senseless: his words, though brief, had been but too explicit; and the horror-struck groupe readily comprehended, that the unfor-

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tunate

fortunate young man had fallen a self-inflicted death. Let us pass over a scene, which created in the minds of each, the most forcible, though varied emotions ; the wretched Marchese uttered not a syllable ; his were feelings too bitter to be expressed ; and this unexpected overthrow of all his hopes and wishes, when they had appeared on the very point of realization, occasioned so strong a revulsion, that nature almost sunk under the chastisement. On recovering from the first shock, he was surprised to find only Zanotti by his side ; for Olivia, seized with sudden and violent convulsions, had retired to her chamber. At this intelligence, Morano started ; and while he forcibly grasped the arm of Zanotti, enquired, in a hurried manner, how long she had been taken ill.

“ Almost

“Almost immediately after the news,” returned Zanotti, with an ironic smile; “and, notwithstanding the alarming state in which his daughter appears, the worthy Conte di Montebino has coolly retired, to prepare for his leaving the castle with all possible expedition. It can, however, be no insignificant business, that calls him thus secretly and hastily away, particularly as I find he means to go unattended.”——

Marco was now once more summoned, when the particulars he delivered clearly evinced there was but little to hope; for, in pursuance of the orders of the Marchese, he had repaired to the wood; but not seeing his master, and knowing that of late he had often rambled towards the stream, he sought him there, only to receive a confirmation of his worst fears, as close upon the brink lay the hat, domino,

and mask of the Signior. The waters now were instantly dragged, by order of Zanotti; but the body not appearing, it was concluded the ill-fated Albenza had floated down the stream, into the river which skirted the domain, and of which it formed a spring. Selfish and unfeeling as was the character of the Marchese, the loss of this his only child pressed heavy on his spirits, already torn with a multitude of fears, and distracted with a load of anxieties, while one still struck deeper than the rest; one, though defeated in its views, yet multiplied a load of guilt and apprehension, which now began to render his pampered existence a burthen and a curse; to these was soon added another striking example of the insignificance of worldly projects, the instability of existence, and a dreadful lesson to the guilty

Morano;

Morano ; for ere the morning's dawn, the form of Olivia di Montebino, that form, a few short hours since, replete with health and loveliness, was now stretched, distorted and disfigured, on the awful couch of eternity ! At an early hour, the Marchese was summoned from his sleepless pillow, by the physician, who, after looking at his patient, declared it was impossible she could live through the day. Soon after supper, she had felt a pain and dizziness of the head ; and this, with the shock of Albenza's death, had so affected her, that she was obliged to be carried to her apartment, and laid upon that bed, from which she never after arose. Sensible, yet unable to speak, she motioned for Montebino to be sent for ; but the servant soon returned, affirming he had gone through the castle, but he was no where to be

found ; while this intelligence seemed to increase the disorder of the unhappy Olivia, whose body, parched with fever, writhing in strong convulsions, soon became livid and discoloured. The physician shook his head, as he pronounced her malady to be beyond his art ; and before the close of night, after the most violent struggles, death put a period to her sufferings. From the moment of his first witnessing her wretched condition, the Marchese had refused to enter the chamber ; ever headstrong and irascible, his domestics now dared not approach him, as in the gloom of his own apartment, he seemed, with a kind of sullen frenzy, to await the fiat of some dreadful stroke, and to be revolving deeds of horror in his mind.

CHAP. VI.

“ In every varied posture, place and hour,
How widow’d every thought of every joy !”

YOUNG.

“ Thou sound and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for
fear

Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
And take the present horror from the time
Which now suits with it.”

SHAKESPEARE.

DURING these events, Viola, immured in her solitary prison, dragged on the chain of many wearied days, till hope became nearly extinct, and fortitude gave way before melancholy truth and repeated disappointments.

She

She was regularly attended every night by the harsh, severe Beatrice, whose stern laconic manner ever repelled the enquiry as it rose to her lips, and checked all attempts at conversation, either by a forbidding reply, or an abrupt departure. Of Albenza she longed to hear; yet what but that he was another's, could she learn? Of Gradisca, and her nephew, amidst all her own distresses, she still felt mindful and anxious: Ah, how did she not wish to do more! how did she not wonder, that with every benevolent inclination, she should be precluded the means of gratifying them, while so many thousands vegetated in the very zenith of wealth and power, without having hearts to apply them! indigent and obscure, friendless and imprisoned, of what benefit to others, of what service to herself, were those

kindly sensibilities with which Nature had so liberally endowed her ! rather, on the contrary, did they now contribute to augment the sense of her situation, and the poignancy of her misfortunes. Adjoining her apartment was a small closet, and there, amidst a heap of dirt and cobwebs, she discovered a few old books ; over these she bent with a delight, which not even their torn and nearly effaced condition could alloy ; and after clearing them from the dust, found one or two were legible ; this appeared a mine of treasure, and she regarded the shrine of learning and genius with the devotion of a saint ; but alas ! it proved not inexhaustible, and she began, finished, and began again, till the language became familiar to her ear, the thoughts wearisome to her mind : “ What a dreadful thing is sameness and monotony ! ”

tony !” sighed Viola, opening the chamber-door to avail herself of Beatrice’s permission to walk in the long gallery : as it closed, the violence of the motion caused something to reverberate with a jingling noise upon the ground like a key : hastening to where the sound came, she soon found herself at the termination of the gallery, and by the door of that chamber where she fancied she had seen the light ; that something had fallen by the motion of the door she was convinced ; and with half repressed expectation, she groped her hands along the flooring and crevices, with which it abounded : disappointed, however, in her search, she was returning, mortified and vexed, to her lonely apartment, when, as her eye glanced upwards, she perceived a long hook, thrust into the wall, on which hung the broken remnants of
two

two old pictures, and some other articles of lumber. Is there not sometimes an impulse within the breast, an irresistible dictate, no reason can repel, no philosophy account for? This impulse Viola now experienced, and though unable to reconcile it, and hopeless as appeared the search, she carefully removed the pictures, and brushing down the rubbish, perceived a large key, the wards of which, though rusted by damp, were not impaired, and on examining it attentively, she found it to be exactly the same as that belonging to her own room, consequently opening all the others; breathless with joy, and trembling with expectation, she applied it to the lock, which, after some difficulty, gave way, and disclosed not a regularly formed apartment, but a sort of passage to a flight of steps, that descended more
on

on the south side of the turret ; nor could she entirely repel a timorous sensation when she remembered it must be that part from whence the light was visible the night she was carried by Bernardo from her chamber ; a circumstance, however, apparently so trivial, was not likely to remain long on a mind occupied by the important prospects of emancipation and deliverance, and cautiously closing the door after her, she descended the stairs, nor stopped, till arrived at a large corridor, on which opened a variety of rooms and passages ; one to the left was that marked by Viola as most likely to effect her escape ; and after having for some time explored a long and dreary way, what was her joy to find that it literally did lead through a chain of passages to an opening on the south side of the turret ! though it was not till the refreshing gale
of

of Heaven blew full upon her, that she could believe the blessings of air and liberty were yet her own: the emotion was too strong, and tears filled her eyes as she sunk on her knees in a transport of gratitude and delight. When recovered from the ecstasy into which this unexpected good fortune had thrown her, she began to consider on the best plan for her to pursue. Alas! with what a sickening sensation did her heart acknowledge, that on the wide surface of the world there did not exist one being on whom she could the least depend, save the honest old Bianca, and where to seek her she knew not. In this exigency, Gradisca rose to her thoughts, and with her also the desire to become acquainted with those particulars she had so long wished to develope; it would therefore be better to seek the first opportunity of going
to

to the cottage, and then consult with the good woman on some method most expedient for her safety and her flight. In these reflections, and in forming and dismissing a thousand schemes, was her time spent till the arrival of Beatrice. It is true, Albenza the husband of another, and lost to her for ever, would obscure each brighter tint of expectation ; but while Viola still loved, with undiminished tenderness and fervour, a treacherous hope had ceased to be the deceptive inmate of her bosom. No longer harrassed by incertitude, or tortured by suspense, disappointment had taught her heroism, and the downfall of her prospects in that first instance, made her look forward to more insignificant evils as trifling and unimportant : though existence was a burthen, still it was one duty and religion commanded her to support, and one

she was resolved to bear with dignity and propriety. "It is a terrible long pull up these dismal galleries," said the surly Beatrice, as she placed her cargo of provision on the table, "and I begin to think I shall not pay my visits as frequently as I have hitherto done; it will make but little difference to you, and"——

"You do not come again till the night after to-morrow, then," interrupted Viola, with an eagerness that she was afraid, a moment after, might have excited suspicion in her gaoler.

"No," replied the housekeeper, "I believe I shall not. Truth to say, I am not over proud of the office, particularly since I hear the figure was seen to vanish near this part."

"MER-

“MERCIFUL God!” cried Viola, to whom the remembrance of all that had befallen herself now occurred, “What figure mean you?”

“It does not come after you, I suppose,” was the insulting reply. Viola was silent, though she felt alarmed; nor could her late happy adventure chase away the vapours of gloom and superstition created by the last words of Beatrice. For the first time she saw her depart with regret; nor did the thickening shades of night bring with them her wonted repose; sleep was banished from her pillow, and trimming the lamp, she continued to meditate on past occurrences, and endeavour to divest her mind of ideas she was ashamed should so much engross it. Loud and hollow blew the wind around the structure, and more than
once

once she started, as the old brittle casement rattled in its gust ; she looked round her chamber, the light cast but a dim and gloomy ray, while the sand, wasting in the hour-glass, warned her of the approach of midnight.

“ AT this awful moment it was,” she exclaimed, clasping her hands in energy, “ that I sought the records of my unknown parents.” As she spoke, a low, though distinct step, trod lightly through the gallery. “ Great God !” she cried, rising hastily from her seat, and darting towards the door, “ What noise was that ? Mighty Heaven ! protect me from all perils, all dangers of the night, all——” Again the murmur of the wind blew loud, and interrupted her petition, while a deep and heavy sigh echoed from the gallery, and increased its terrors. Viola now
remem-

remembered the evening previous to the Marchesa's death ; she shuddered, scarcely respired ; yet, agonized by suspense, and hardly knowing what she did, burst the door, and beheld the Monk seen by Albenza ! but not long did her starting eyes gaze on the mysterious vision ; for it cast one transient look upon her, and then disappeared towards the door through which she had entered with Bernardo ; while Viola, uttering a scream, that vibrated through the mouldering chambers, rushed wildly back to her room, and closing the door, threw herself on the bed in a state of desperation, from which it was long ere she recovered. That a being of preternatural existence wandered through the castle for some great design, whether of good or evil, she now no longer doubted, while the romantic incidents of her own life, could not but
favour

favour an idea, that it bore some analogy to herself. That she had both seen and heard the figure, was most certain ; true was it also, that she was doomed to be the comfortless inmate of its melancholy habitation. The thought struck cold to her bosom, though the long and fervent prayer she offered, proved at once her innocence and reliance.

THE following evening, favoured in the absence of Beatrice, was fixed on by Viola to attempt her visit to the cottage : for, from the late horrible adventure, she was more than ever solicitous to quit her present abode ; and resolved to decide immediately on some plan for her speedy conveyance from a place, once the scene of love and happiness, but now only the memorial of lost peace and violated affections.

She spent the ensuing day in a further examination of the building. All the doors were fastened exactly as she had left them on the preceding, nor was there any aperture, or sign of violence, by which her nocturnal visitor could have entered. As the approach of evening advanced, she became fearful and uneasy, and a thousand times mounted to the casement, to view the road leading to the valley, and almost as often was tempted to forego her design as hazardous and impracticable; yet, while she one instant thought it better to submit to present ills, rather ‘than fly to others that she knew not of,’ another she was urged on by irresistible impulse, while the hope of gaining tidings of her parents, and the fear of passing the remainder of her days in her present situation, were both powerful incitements, and involuntarily she

she found herself at the door leading to the flight of steps, the key grasped tight within her hand, and her feet moving forward with the utmost rapidity. In about a quarter of an hour she reached the court-yard, and hastily bent her way through the old chapel, which led directly out on a narrow road extending to the valley. Here she stopped, faint, trembling, and breathless, scarce daring to look back, yet almost fearing to proceed. She stood for some moments, wavering and irresolute, till one passing slowly by, caused her to start. It was a peasant, whose face she remembered, as a neighbour of Gradisca's in the valley, and of him she ventured to ask, whether she still dwelt there?

“YES, Signiora,” replied the man,
 “I believe she starves there; for one

can hardly call that living, where folks have scarcely a morsel to satisfy the cravings of nature." This remark was followed by a shake of the head and a sigh, which was echoed by his mournful auditor, who, on being told he was returning home, requested permission to accompany him as far as his route lay her way. This was readily agreed to; and, among other topics of conversation, Viola, pointing to the lofty turrets of Morano Castle, demanded if he knew aught of its Lord.

"TRULY, Signiora, I do not," replied the peasant, "and right glad am I to be able to say so: for, by all accounts, the Marchese, though a very great man, like too many others of the same condition, is not a very good one." A long silence followed this observation, on the part of Viola, whose
 atten-

attention soon became engrossed by the reviewal of those scenes, so well remembered, and so dearly loved ; nor hardly could she repress the starting tear, as she traced the path once imprinted with the footsteps of Albenza.

“ You have now only to keep the path,” said her conductor, stopping at the door of a small neat cabin, “ and the cottage of Gradisca is the first you will see below the pass.” Viola kindly returned his salutations, and a few paces further brought her, half sinking with fear and trepidation, to the place of her destination. At the door was seated Gradisca, fit inhabitant for this abode of wretchedness ; her eyes were bent in gloomy meditation on the ground, while each wrinkled furrow of her care worn countenance, spoke not the pensive language of mild dejection,

but the tortured workings of a mind goaded with agony and de-pair.

“WHERE is Lorenzo?” exclaimed Viola, terrified by her appearance, and alarmed at seeing her alone, “Where is Lorenzo?”

“HE sleeps,” replied the woman, in a hollow voice; “poor youth, would that his slumber were eternal!”

“You do not know me, surely,” said Viola, approaching and taking her hand; “Have you forgotten her in whom you seemed to take so peculiar, so deep an interest? Have you forgotten Viola di Benincasor?”

“Ah, no!” replied Gradisca, raising her languid eyes, and fixing them with earnestness on her face, “those
features

features are still impressed upon remembrance, though my sufferings have somewhat impaired it. Oh, Signiora ! since last I saw you, I have been sadly treated ; yet, not for myself I grieve ; not for myself do I complain ; Lorenzo, innocent, unfortunate Lorenzo ; it is for him I sorrow, and for him I supplicate : But where," she continued, " have you been so long ?" or, rather, Wherefore now thus rash, as to venture near a being so wretched and proscribed as I am ?" Viola, who, hitherto lost in astonishment, had forgotten her own perilous situation, now hastily took her arm, and supporting her into the interior, briefly related all that had befallen herself since their last meeting, which she concluded with acquainting her of her means, and intention to escape on the following night, provided she would agree to assist her.

“ THAT the tyrannous and mysterious cruelty of the Marchese has accused you of having aided my supposed elopement, I am already apprised off,” continued Viola ; “ but why he should thus single out one, apparently so harmless, for his particular persecutions, is a point, I confess, that long has puzzled me.”

DURING this speech, the change in Gradisca's countenance had been visible and alarming ; her withered hand, as it leant feebly on the crutch, shook with emotion, and her whole frame became trembling and agitated : “ Forbear,” she at length said, “ to seek into this dreadful secret ; for know, it is a load of horror that would shake your very soul to be informed of ! Would to God I were in my grave, for there only can I hope to experience
tran-

tranquillity ! Signiora," she added, the tears streaming down her pallid cheek, " ere to-morrow night, Lorenzo is lost to me for ever ! The Marchese, notwithstanding my prayers and entreaties, has finally determined that my poor boy shall be lodged in a place destined for the reception of lunatics, as he will not suffer any useless persons on his estate ; while I—dreadful thought ! am to be taken into the castle, as assistant to the housekeeper, and never to behold him more." Viola wept ; she looked around the cottage, and then on the weak, emaciated being before her, with a sensation of anguish which she had never more keenly experienced : " We will all fly together !" she cried, with quickness ; " this night, this hour, let us depart !"

" Look," said Gradisca, interrupt-

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ing

ing her, "how lowering are the Heavens; they, my child, smile not on such an enterprise; already the distant thunder portends a coming storm, and what could I—what could Lorenzo do? You, too, so young, so fair, so unprotected—what would become of us?"

"AND to-morrow," replied Viola peevishly, "will be too late."

"LET us hope not, answered Gracisca, with something more of cheerfulness in her tone, and as if struck by a sudden recollection; "yesterday was the time appointed to tear him from me; he was then, though better in reason, so enfeebled in body, as scarcely to be able to quit his wretched pallet:—A blessed hope now strikes me—when they come to-morrow, I will
feign

feign him worse; and do you now, under favour of the darkness, return to your prison; then when the castle clock tolls this same hour on the ensuing evening, repair hither again; I will adjust every thing for our departure; the night will be before us; I have a relation, porter of a convent near Naples, and God, I trust, will be our guide."

As she finished, a loud peal of thunder rolled awfully above, and seemed to shake the feeble tenement on its foundation.

"JESU Marie!" said Gradisca, closing the lattice, for large drops of rain now beat heavily through it: "Jesu Marie! what a peal was that!"

VIOLA shuddered as she retreated

more into the apartment, for the darkness was rapidly increasing, the blast howled mournfully through the woods, and the flashes of vivid lightning made her fear she should be detained through the night, and thereby hazard a discovery ere beyond the reach of her enemies; again her eye explored the melancholy habitation, nor could she repel the sombre and gloomy reflections that crossed her mind as she contemplated her present companion. Gradisca, observing her lost in meditation, rose and left the room; when Viola, jaded in spirits, and overcome by the sulphurous vapour of the air, ventured to open the lattice, and give it freedom; the rain poured in torrents, while the whole atmosphere was convulsed, seeming every instant to disclose sheets of liquid fire, and convinced her it would be impossible to
think

think of returning that night; yet, though this precluded a repetition of the horrors she had encountered within the gloomy turret of Morano castle, she could as ill reconcile the idea of remaining where she was at present, as check those forebodings which now sat heavy on her soul. In a few minutes her dismal hostess returned; her looks were more than usually agitated, and bore evident signs of terror and affright; with an emotion she could not disguise, she quickly closed and barred the lattice, then sunk, trembling and gasping, on a seat. Viola flew towards her: "Hush!" cried Gradisca, "Heard you not sounds? I—I—am certain I heard voices under the window—they spoke of Lorenzo!"—She added, in a convulsive whisper, and grasping the arm of Viola—"they spoke of Lorenzo!"

VIOLA

VIOLET with difficulty breathed ; again the lightning darted through the casement, and another dreadful reverberation of the thunder followed ; she pressed the cold hand of Gradisca ; “ Why do you fear ? ” she articulated, “ What dangers can threaten you ? or who would harm Lorenzo ? ” — “ Oh ! ” answered the woman, growing still paler, and looking fearfully upon her, “ you little think Lorenzo is ” —

“ Who ? ” interrupted the trembling Viola : “ Oh, mighty God ! who is he ? ” She clasped her hands together, while, as she sunk on her knees by the side of Gradisca, the latter uttered a loud shriek, and catching hold of a small ivory cross that fell from her bosom on the floor, exclaimed in wild impetuous accents, “ Whose was that cross ? — how came you by it ? Oh yes, it

it must be so ; these features—they tell a tale so true, so wonderful, that no longer can I doubt the evidence of my feelings, which own thee for the offspring of”——

“ THEN my mother lives !” interrupted Viola ; “ then I have still a parent !”

“ ANSWER me first,” replied Graciosa, endeavouring to assume composure, “ and answer me solemnly, as you would utter at the great account ; Did the Marchesa di Morano ever unfold to you any circumstances relating to your birth and family ? That you were the reputed child of humble parents, is a story I was told in common with the rest, but could not credit ; for an incident never to be forgotten ; and a face indelibly impressed on my
remem-

remembrance, were constantly recurring to my mind, whenever I beheld you."

"ALAS !" replied Viola, mournfully, " that I am ignorant, both of the name, rank, and condition, of the authors of my existence, is but too true ; but, that there were particulars respecting my situation, of which I was enjoined inviolable secrecy by the Marchesa, is certain also ; and trust me, my friend, though the disclosing them would now obtain me the knowledge and possession of all I hold most valuable, nothing under Heaven should induce me to commit a breach of confidence, a breach of honour !"

" LISTEN then to me," said Giadisca, while the admiration she felt lightened up her pensive countenance ;
 " listen

“listen with attention to my words, and if what I am about to relate does not prove I have some ground for my surmises, never put faith in me more :—Look,” she proceeded, pointing to a small door at the end of the apartment, “in that ruinous chamber expired a being, whose very look, eye, feature, were to me so like your own, that I could almost fancy this the very night, when, with her infant, she begged for shelter at my cabin door. ’Twas such a storm as this ; now near eighteen years ago. I had not been long in bed before the cries of some one in distress struck faintly on my ear ; I started from my pillow, and flew with haste to the mattrass on which Lorenzo then reposed in health and peacefulness ; convinced, however, that he was in safety, I concluded I had been dreaming,

ing,

ing, and again tried to compose myself to sleep : but soon the sounds grew louder, and presently a female voice begged, for the love of Heaven, I would save her child. Oh, blest reflection ! which still doth shine a ray of comfort on my gloomy hours, I flew, and succoured from the pitiless element one of the fairest creatures I had ever beheld, or ever can see again. At the gate, faint and shivering, stood her, I think your mother. A slight peasant's garb, clinging with the wet, was all the guard to save her from the cold ; while the drenched veil, with her long chesnut locks, were spread over the sleeping infant her white arms pressed upon her bosom. I took the child, and gently led her into the cottage, where, soon having kindled a fire, she began to revive ; and having swallowed some cordial, which, with difficulty,

culty, I poured down her throat, opened her eyes : Ah ! can I ever forget their soft expression ? She first fixed them in fondness on the babe, and then with such a beam of gratitude on me, as more than repaid me for all I ever suffered on her account. Having fresh clothed the little girl" (Viola started) "with some homely, though clean apparel, that had once been Lorenzo's, I recollected that I had also things by me of my late Lady's, and proposed to her to change her garments, alledging, those of the deceased Marchesa di Albenza would exactly fit her. But I had scarcely uttered the words, ere she betrayed the most violent emotions ; and bursting into tears, said, she needed none, she only wished to die ! With every argument in my power I endeavoured to console her, entreating her to be calm, and assuring her

her

her no harm should befall her under a roof, where I begged she would remain as long as convenient to herself. Alas ! little did I think it was destined to be her final home. In a few hours, the cold, together with the extreme agitation under which she seemed to labour, brought on the most alarming symptoms : in turn she was attacked by chilly damp perspirations ; then again, raging under the paroxysms of thirst and fever. I carried her to my own bed, and watched near her through the night ; but by the morning, she was so ill, as to make it necessary to call in some medical assistant, who declared her disorder would inevitably prove fatal. Never shall I forget her meek and saint-like conduct on the occasion ; a conduct she maintained to the latest moment of her existence."

" AND

“AND the child?” interrupted Viola. “You shall hear,” replied Gradisca, trimming the lamp, and looking timidly round the gloomy apartment; “in that is the purport of my story. On that very day, being apprised of her danger, she desired me to send a note, directed to one of the Fathers of the neighbouring monastery; which was as quickly answered, by the arrival of a man of serious aspect, in the garb of a peasant, who, at her command, was conducted to her chamber; and after more than half an hour spent in apparently earnest discourse, I heard him descend the stairs, and pass the wicket. On returning, I found her drowned in tears, and the infant gone; for in consideration, as she informed me, of her expected dissolution, she had consigned it to the care of a relation, who lived not far from hence; and who, she

she hoped, would protect and support her. The remainder of the day was then passed in prayer, and dedicated to that Creator, whom it pleased soon to put a period to her sufferings, and to receive her into that blessed Kingdom, of which I am sure she was a fit inhabitant. From that time I have ever been most anxious to learn the fate of the child, but my enquiries proving fruitless, I have been obliged to forego all hope of solving a mystery, which unceasingly occurs to my mind, and much perplexes me. Round *her* neck was tied that crucifix, or at least one the model of it, which you now wear. From the time of her child's departure, I saw it no more; and this it is that has led me to suppose"—Here her voice faltered, while Viola, whose whole soul was absorbed in what she had just heard, remained still in the

same attitude of attention, with her eyes rivetted on the face of her narrator. That she might prove the offspring of the unfortunate, whose latest sigh had been breathed in her present asylum, was surely probable; yet how she had become so closely connected with the late Marchesa, was a circumstance that filled her with doubt and wonder.

“WILL you not try to rest,” at length said Gradisca, breaking the long silence, “though I fear you cannot much like the room I am obliged to offer you, for it is that the Signiora died in; most willingly would I relinquish my own to your use, but that I dread were Lorenzo to awake, and not find me within call, he would be alarmed.

VIOLA

VIOLETTA sighed, and for an instant an involuntary sensation of melancholy superstition filled her bosom, yet it was but transient; and with a heart almost too full for utterance, she arose from the table, and pressing the hand of Gradisca, took the lamp;—ere, however, she had reached the decayed and broken door, which led to the stair-case, a violent gust of wind shook the cottage, and burst it forcibly open.

“SANTA Marie!” cried Gradisca, devoutly crossing herself; “what a night it is!”——“It is indeed,” replied Viola, shuddering, “a dreadful one! yet the blast howls but around our dwelling, it can only pierce the hearts of those, who have reason to tremble at the voice which raises it.”

GRADISCA shook her head ; and Viola appearing to acquire courage from her own reflections, waved her hand, and passed on to the destined chamber. Scarcely had she looked around it, when Gradisca entered, and seated herself at the foot of the mat-trass.

“ ON that bed then,” said Viola, gazing mournfully upon it, “ on that bed, perhaps my mother expired !”

“ AYE,” replied Gradisca, “ I could almost fancy I saw her at this moment, almost think I hear her last groan, and witness her final struggle ;—but I forget you need repose, and will leave you to seek it.” They now entered on some further particulars relative to their projected schemes of escape, when

it was agreed that Viola should return by break of dawn to her prison, and there collecting such things as were necessary, repair in the evening back to the cottage, when they would proceed as fast as possible on their way to Naples; wisely concluding, that safety and concealment were most likely to be found in the heart of a populous city. After recommending her to the care of Heaven, Gradisca left the room; while Viola dwelt on each receding footstep, till they sunk in silence through the dwelling. With almost religious veneration did she now regard her desolate apartment; the little furniture which once it boasted, was rotting with mildew and decay; and the small casement window served only to admit the forked glare, which struck terror to her mind; to rest was impossible, as
the

the storm continued to rage violently; and sitting down by the bed, she drew a volume of Tasso from her pocket, and putting fresh oil into her lamp, began to read; but she soon wandered from the beauties of her poet, to his sorrows and misfortunes; and while pity and regret filled her breast, at the recollection of his calamities, she could not but moralize on the inefficacy of genius and talent, when want, calumny, and imprisonment, had been their best reward. With the book open in her hand, she continued in deep rumination, till the bell from the stately turrets of Morano castle tolled the hour of one. Viola felt cold and weary, and placing the light in the chimney, was preparing to lay down on the bed, when a low murmur of voices, under the window, dis-

tinctly caught her ear ; and while respiration became suspended, she listened with a kind of desperate expectation, that each moment would present some horrible figure at her door. Soon, however, all became still ; and concealing the lamp behind the bed, she stole softly to the window, where, after remaining some time, she began to think her fears had been groundless, and was again approaching the bed, as her eye caught the shadow of a dark form, which a nearer view proved to be that of a tall, manly figure, enveloped in a close black cloak. With terror indescribable did she see him pass behind the thicket, and reach the gate ; how to act, she knew not ; plunder certainly was not the aim of those who visited this desolate abode of poverty. The idea of Lorenzo now
flashed

flashed across her mind ; and with it, the strong conviction, that for some hidden and mysterious cause, he was both an object of terror and vengeance to the Marchese, whose emissaries she did not doubt were come to perpetrate some dreadful deed ! The thought was unsupportable, for the same tender, yet undefinable sympathy, which, from the first moment she beheld him, had bound her in unison to his fate, now beat high within her bosom. For some time she listened, in a state of the most anxious expectation, till the noise increasing, and voices being plainly distinguishable, she took the lamp from its concealment, and unbarring the door, softly descended to the chamber where reposed the unconscious and innocent Lorenzo : his slumbers were uneasy and disturbed ; stretched in his clothes, on the hard and mise-

nable pallet, he lay with one arm over his dog, while the other concealed the string with which he was tied in his bosom. Viola's first impulse was to awaken him and alarm Gradisca ; yet a minute's consideration told her, that she would but run the hazard of encountering the ruffians in gaining the apartment of the one, and that in all probability, the sudden surprize would only plunge Lorenzo into a paroxysm of raving and insanity ; to stay and watch beside him was therefore her final determination : “ and whatever prove thy destiny, injured unfortunate,” she cried, enthusiastically raising her hands above his head, I will share it with thee.” Scarcely had she spoken, before a step was heard softly ascending the stairs, and Viola bounded to the door, which she fastened with a strength

and rapidity at any other time she would have been incapable of.

“ BY the mass !” exclaimed a rough voice on the outside, “ it is a pelting night. I don’t care how soon this job is dispatched ; and as for you, my Lord, why you seem to have more qualms in clipping the wings of this young nestling than”————

“ PEACE !” answered a tremulous tone, which came fraught with horrible conviction (for it was that of Morano), “ it will soon be over. He sleeps, I doubt not, and the blow shall be a sure one, for I’ll do it myself ; while your diligence in disposing of the body, ensures reward for you, to me security.” The manner in which this was uttered, the starts and catches of the voice, too forcibly

cibly betrayed the little of peace and security there was in the breast of the guilty speaker. During this short conference, to which she had listened with a kind of frenzied eagerness, Viola had stood with her back against the door, from which, however, she now moved, conscious her strength was unequal to prevent the entrance of the Marchese, whom she momentarily expected in the chamber, and that she was not only destined to witness the murder of an inoffensive fellow-creature, but also to share in his fate, appeared now most certain. With feelings almost bordering on madness she watched the countenance of the sleeping victim, while the blue flashes that glared upon it, only increased its native paleness, and added horror indisable to the scene. To call for help was
useless :

useless ; alas ! it would but expedite the designs of the assassins, and alarm Gradisca, whose infirmities precluded all hope of assistance or exertion from her : clinging round the unconscious Lorenzo, she awaited the sequel with despairing firmness, as again she caught the voice of the Marchese, speaking in a low whisper. “ I have the cloak ready below,” said the villain who spoke first. “ ’Tis well,” answered Morano. And Viola had just time to extinguish her light, and conceal herself behind the torn bed-curtain, as the door was burst open, and they entered.

“ LEAVE me,” said the Marchese to Bernardo, (whom Viola now recognized,) “ yet stay, — I—I—had forgotten ; I——hope all is safe.”

“ AYE, marry is it,” replied the
Steward,

Steward, "only I'd counsel you to dispatch, 'tis long past midnight; and"— "Have I the dagger?" interrupted Morano, moving involuntarily back towards the door; "have I got the dagger?"

"It sticks within your girdle there, my Lord," answered the man in a contemptuous tone, "though you seem to have taken the wrong road to make use of it."

"HAH! Did you not hear one speak?" exclaimed the Marchese, the big drops starting to his livid forehead.

"TUSH! it was only the owl screaming from the woods," replied Bernardo, impatiently.

"How

“How quietly he sleeps,” said Morano, gazing upon him as he lay. “Thou never shalt sleep more.” He now drew the dagger from his side, and approached the pallet. Viola became faint and breathless, while the rustling she made caused the Marchese to start and call Bernardo, who was fast hastening to the door.

“SOME one is at hand, depend on it!” he cried, in a tone of terror and irresolution, while every feature of his haggard face became ghastly and distorted.

“WHY then the sooner you conclude the better,” answered the other; “and t’were well you gave him into my hands after all.”

“THEN do it yourself!” exclaimed
Morano,

Morano, his voice half suffocated with emotion, “ while I wait on the outside.”

BERNARDO now unsheathed the weapon, and raised his arm, as Viola rushed frantically from her hiding place, and with a shriek that echoed through the cottage, clung convulsively to the terrified Lorenzo, who, awakened by the noise, gazed wildly and vacantly about him.

“ MY Lord !” cried Viola, as she still grasped her arms around the maniac, “ for mercy, reflect on what you do ! Oh spare him ! spare him ! For God’s sake embroil not your hands in his most guiltless blood !”

“ SECURE that meddling woman !” exclaimed the Marchese, turning to Bernardo,

Bernardo, while he forcibly wrested Lorenzo from his hold. At this moment, and while the loud screams of Viola resounded in dreadful vibration, Gradisca tottered into the room; terror, however, seemed to nerve her feeble hand, and give energy to her limbs; or, darting on Bernardo, she had just dashed the dagger from his hold, as Morano, by a dextrous side-blow, buried *his* deep in the breast of the unhappy Lorenzo, who, uttering one faint and hollow groan, breathed forth his spirit in the wound.

“MONSTER!” cried Gradisca; “fiend among men! Look on thy bloody work, and if thy eyes are not already cracked at the fell spectacle, let this assurance blast thee to perdition:—Thou hast slain thy child, thy *son*, thy offspring, Devil! the offspring of thee and Juli-

ana ! Justice ! justice is now within my power ! I can—I will discover—I will”—— She clenched her hands violently together, and, casting a look of anguish on Lorenzo, burst into a convulsive laugh, and fainted on the body.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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